System

Issue No. 13 – £10 / €14 / $22

Fan Chengcheng wears Givenchy

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Ni Ni wears Gucci

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NOVEMBER 30 – DECEMBER 01 2018
BY DAVID SIMS

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Contributors

Blake Abbie is an actor, singer and editor at large of *A Magazine Curated By*. His autobiography would be titled *A Guide to Travelling with Three Lives Stuffed into One 20kg Suitcase*.

Haider Ackermann is a Colombian-born French designer. He would like his autobiography to be entitled *Excuse My Dust*.

Musician-turned-editorial-director **William Alderwick** would title his future autobiography *Kicking Out With the JAMs, Volume #23*, riffing off KLF referencing MC5 and Robert Anton Wilson's *Illuminatus!* trilogy.

Carine Bizet is a French writer. *I'm Not Perky* would be the title of her autobiography, a nod to *The Addams Family*

Pull My Finger would be the title of **Tim Blanks**' autobiography. It would chronicle his childhood in New Zealand, being a roommate of Jerry Hall and Bryan Ferry, and his current role as editor-at-large at the Business of Fashion.

Farid Chenoune, a Paris-based writer, would title his autobiography *I Was There*.

Fraser Cooke's memoirs would have the title *Who Would Have Guessed?* and answer the question: how do you go from hairdressing to some of the world's most celebrated collaborations as Special Projects Senior Director at Nike?

Painting Light is the fitting title for the imaginary autobiography of **Jean-Philippe Delhomme**, a Paris-based fashion illustrator, writer, and painter.

Twenty-five-year-old twins and photographers **Jalan and Jibril Durimel** would call their autobiography, *I Wonder How It Ends*.

Roe Ethridge is a photographer based in New York. His autobiography would be called *Roe, Like Fish Eggs*.

Alexander Fury is fashion features director of *AnOther Magazine* and menswear critic of the *Financial Times*. Unless published posthumously, his autobiography would be titled *Hell Hath No Fury*.

Pulitzer Prize-winning writer **Robin Givhan** is the *Washington Post*'s fashion critic and would name her autobiography after a phrase a friend uses about her: *Trying to Look at the World Through Kind Eyes*.

Girl Walks Into a Bar, Meets Rankin and Jefferson is the title chosen for her autobiography by **Katie Grand**, who helped launch *Dazed* with the pair, and is now editor in chief of *Love*.

Hung Huang works as a publisher and journalist in Beijing. Her autobiography would be called *Shaking All the Time*.

Waiting would be the title of the memoirs of **Fumiko Imano**, a Japanese artist whose photographs often feature herself as identical twins.

A Leonard Cohen quote, *There Is a Crack in Everything, That's How the Light Gets In*, would be the title of New York-based photographer **Dominique Issermann**'s autobiography.

Fashion editor **Karen Langley** has come to the conclusion that her autobiography would be titled *Definitely Not a Model*.

Being nothing if not enthusiastic at all times, the title of British curator **Shonagh Marshall**'s autobiography would be *Fanaticus*, which means 'enthusiast' in Latin.

Dominic McVey, entrepreneur and non-executive director of Hela Clothing, would title his autobiography *Doing Good Is Good Business*.

Committed to buying a new book every day, **Hans Ulrich Obrist**, Swiss curator and artistic director at the Serpentine Galleries, would add memoirs called *No Autobiography, No Cry* to his library.

Closet Case would be the reminiscences of **Loïc Prigent**, a Paris-based writer and documentary filmmaker whose subjects have included Alexander McQueen, Marc Jacobs, Karl Lagerfeld and Yves Saint Laurent.

Robi Rodriguez is a Spanish photographer whose autobiography would be entitled *Naive Melody*.

Karim Sadli is a Parisian photographer whose autobiography would be called *The Others!*

Grace Wales Bonner, a London-born fashion designer, would name her autobiography, *Reflections*.

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"It feels like a crisp spring morning in a bottle."
DAVID MALLETT

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Fluidity is fashion's word du jour.

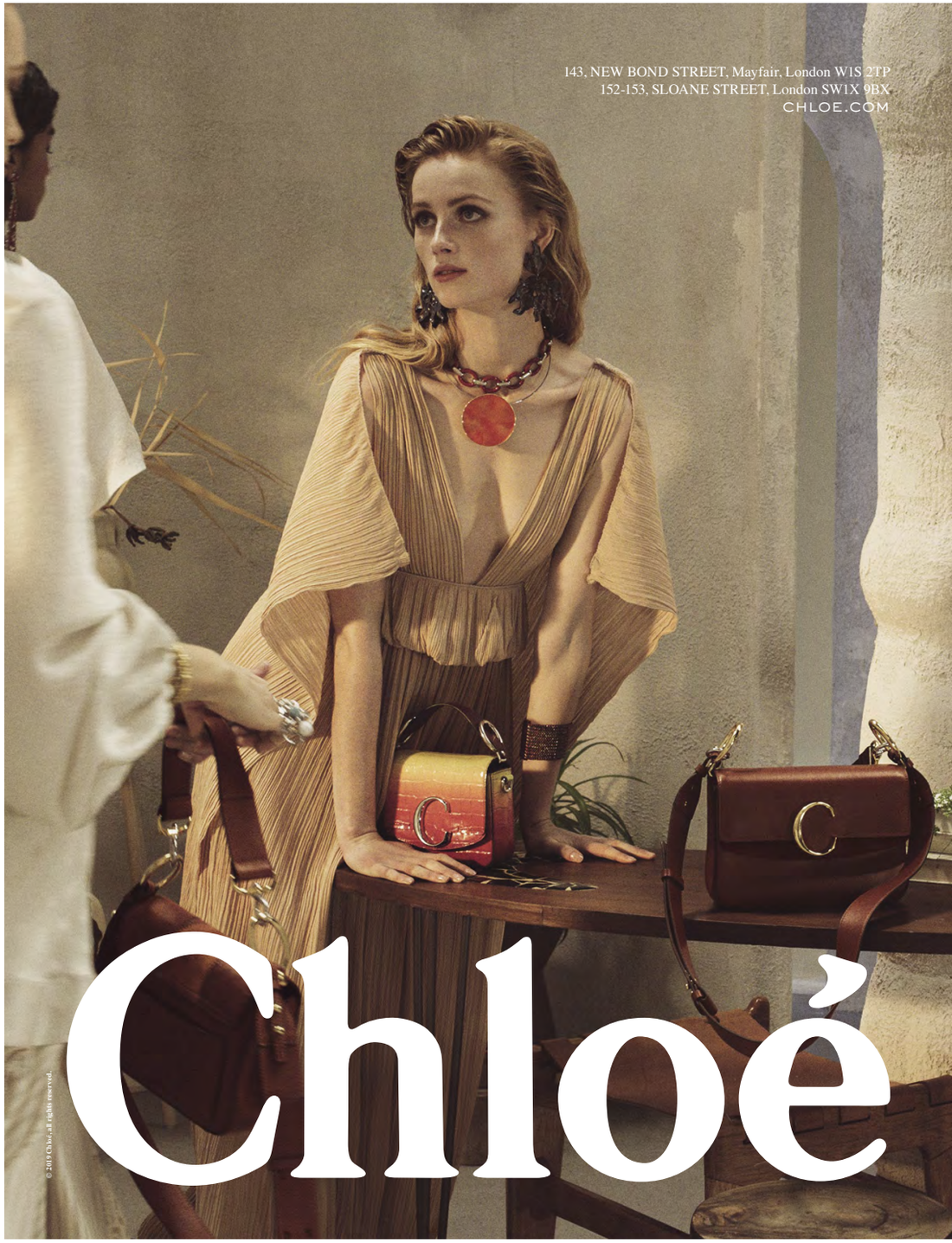
Which is no surprise, given how swiftly things now have a habit of either emerging or vanishing. And for better or worse, the beliefs we hold dear feel increasingly fleeting. How we navigate and adapt to change has, it seems, become the primary barometer to success and longevity in fashion. Which is why we've chosen to explore it in this issue of *System*.

Take, for example, the heady rise of Chinese social-media stars, three of whom grace our covers. It's a telling example of quite how significantly focus can shift – in society, economics, technology, as well as fashion. And while Mr. Bags, the Beijing-based blogger, can now sell $500,000 worth of co-branded Tod's bags in just seven minutes, in Western countries entire brands and businesses are succumbing to crippling downturns in fortunes.

Meanwhile, Juergen Teller's intimate photographs of Marc Jacobs – veiled in dense clouds of vape smoke, in his New York home – have their own multi-layered back story. The last time Teller photographed Jacobs *chez lui*, the designer's principal residence was in Paris; he was juggling two houses (of the fashion variety: his own and the behemoth that is Louis Vuitton), and he was still happily chain-smoking Marlboro Lights. Alexander Fury's accompanying interview with Jacobs is a touching examination of what the essence of fashion can truly mean to a designer faced with the uncertainty of change.

Indeed, objects like the one you're holding are subject to their own turbulent times. Which led us to ask 50 of the industry's leading magazine editors a question: 'What can print do that digital cannot?' Their often-passionate responses evoke feelings of permanence, history, nostalgia, and defiance.

These words seemed suddenly both heightened and meaningless when, as we were closing this issue of *System*, on an early Parisian evening in mid-April, the unfathomable, tragic news seeped across the city: Notre-Dame de Paris was burning down. As we watched this monument of beauty and belief for centuries almost disappear in just a few hours, we once again asked ourselves: in the end, is anything truly built to last?



‘Followers are like very close friends to me.’

The Chinese social-media stars keeping Western fashion alive, post by post.

By Hung Huang
Interviews by Blake Abbie
Portfolio by Juergen Teller

‘As an ambassador, your role is to be the transmitter, to explain a brand’s concept and story. Depending on the style of brand, I’ll adjust how I speak on its behalf – we always manage to find a balance between their needs and mine.’

Angelababy
Actress and Dior ambassador
100 million followers on Weibo

Onlylady
有趣有范儿 全新独创
CD

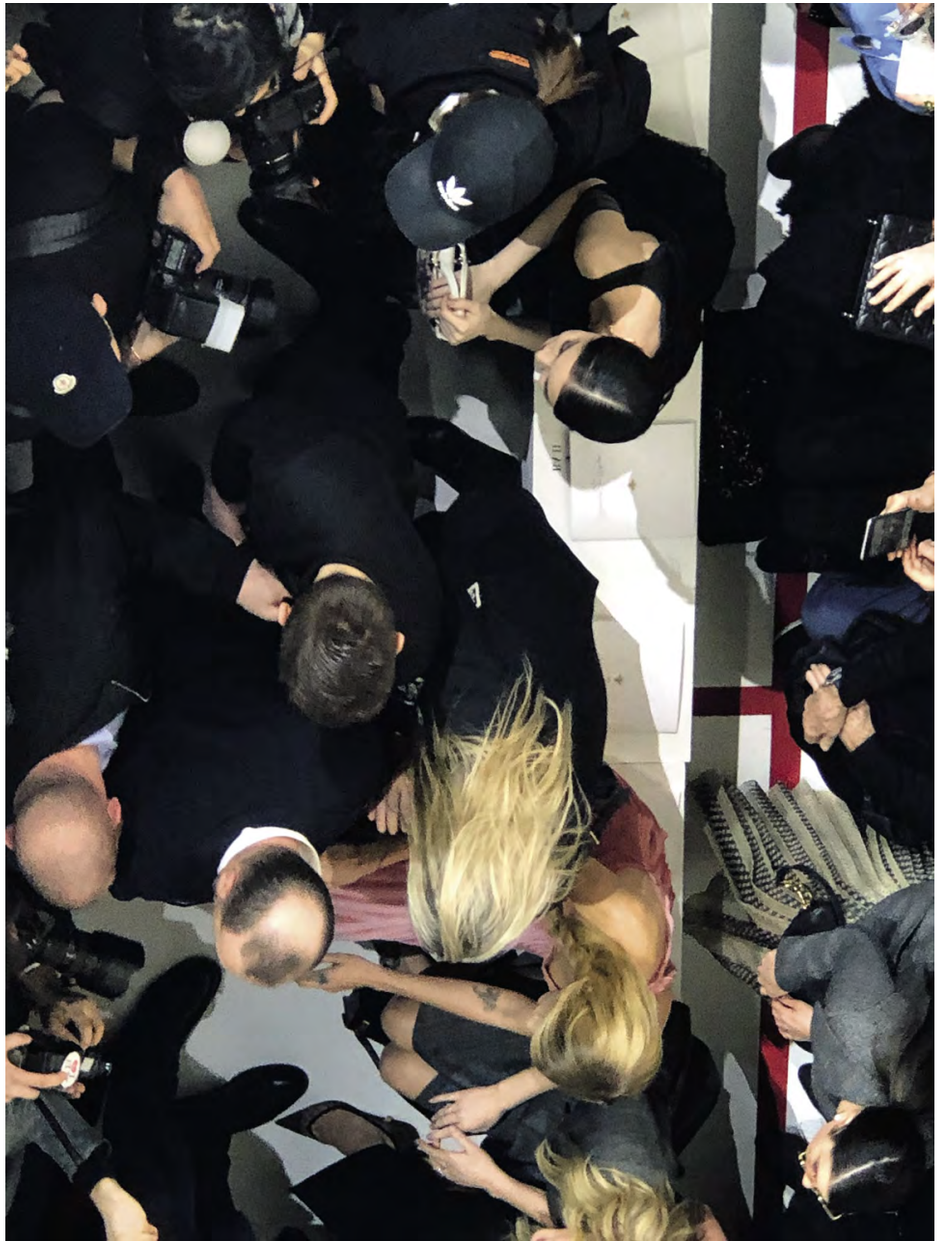
Onlylady
有趣有范儿 全新独创
CD

‘Any event I attend or any film I’m in is an expression of my attitude towards fashion, and my understanding of it.’

Angelababy

**‘I post everything myself.
I once shared a picture of my baby’s diaper.
Followers are like my very close friends.’**

Angelababy



A E E W W E
V E E M M E
U J J O O U U
Z Z E E R R

‘As a bridge between brands and consumers, I take my responsibility extremely seriously. My fans seem to be very happy, because I try to recommend only great products – I even use them myself.’

Fan Chengcheng
Actor, singer & Givenchy ambassador
11 million followers on Weibo

Adam Fan

‘What impresses me most about my followers is that they are willing to help each other out. If that’s something they’ve learned from me, I’d be very happy, but I’m not sure my influence goes that far!’

Fan Chengcheng

‘My followers think of me only as the movie character they see on screen, so I like to share my personal life on social media, giving them a glimpse of when I’m travelling, or of my cat.’

Ni Ni
Actress and Gucci ambassador
21 million followers on Weibo

‘My fans and me. How do I explain it? We depend on each other. I need them to like my work. And when I have time, I like to check their comments on my Weibo and Instagram because they give me confidence.’

Ni Ni

ON THE AIR
VOGUE

VOGUE

Photography assistant: Karin Xiao. Post-production: Catalin Plesa @ Quickfix Retouch.

‘My bag is my key look. Some days, I choose what to wear based entirely on the bag I want to carry that day. I am a luxury shopper, so I’m basically a “bagfan” myself.’

Mr. Bags
Key Opinion Leader (KOL),
e-commerce entrepreneur and bag designer
5 million followers on Weibo

It was 2014. Céline was showing its Fall/Winter collection in Beijing. In the front row, next to the editors of *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar* and *Elle*, was a man with skinny, high-chiselled cheekbones, and hair streaked with silver held tightly in a ponytail. He wore a white Comme des Garçons men's shirt with black ankle-length skirt pants by a local Chinese designer called Bai Peng. I know because he had bought them in my store, Brand New China, in Beijing. I thought no Chinese men would actually wear them in public, simply because no one was that fashion forward. I was wrong, Wang Yi was.

At the time, Wang was editor in chief of all fashion-related content on sina.com, a company with revenues of $2.11 billion in 2018, which owns Weibo, China's Twitter-like microblogging platform that today has over 460 million active users. He was in charge of content on five Sina channels: Woman and Fashion, Art, Health, Education and Lifestyle; in other words, he was the guy who could bring millions of eyeballs to any fashion event. A year before the Céline show, he had combined the Woman and Fashion channels into one, and made Sina and its billions of daily page views the most important platform for luxury fashion brands in China.

Last month, I met Wang Yi in his office, still with the same look but without the high-fashion outfit. Instead, he was in full geek mode: olive-green T-shirt and baggy jeans that were practically falling off of his skinny waist, and a big lumberjack flannel shirt. He is now the general manager of Sina's commercial content, in charge of both advertising and editorial collaborations. He seemed content to let Yuki Zhao, his handpicked deputy, run everything fashion related. He was comfortable in his clothes and ready to show off his latest gadgets to the visitor.

With the growth of e-commerce in China, Sina and Weibo are uniquely positioned to drive traffic to anyone's online store, an ability that allowed them to fight back after losing significant market share to Tencent's WeChat. Weibo has an advantage thanks to young celebrities, like Angelababy, Chris Lee and TF Boys. These mega-celebrities do not only have huge fan base in the tens of millions, but also sophisticated fan clubs that can drive sales of celebrity-endorsed products. Fan-club members earn merit points when they buy concert tickets, movie tickets or products represented by the celebrities. These points then earn fans chances to meet their idols, or even take a selfie with them. A recent art exhibition organized by singer Chris Lee titled *Supermarket*, showed artwork by young artists and offer various products, such as lipsticks and eggs, for sale. Each fan was allowed only 10 items, it was sold out in two hours.

The majority of these fans are female, and they not only follow fashion idols, but also boy bands, such as the wildly popular phenomenon, TFBoys. Like Angelbaby and her

'I love fashion and hope that I am considered an "influencer" who can impact many people. I know my followers like my opinions – not only the aesthetics of fashion, but also the idea of my lifestyle. Some have even chosen fashion-related college majors because of me. That's a mutual achievement.'

Fil Xiao Bai
KOL and fashion blogger
4 million followers on Weibo

'I now travel to different cities to meet my bagfans. In the past, we've held bagfan conventions in Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, London, Paris, Los Angeles and other cities. Many bagfans buy what I recommend.'

Mr. Bags
KOL, e-commerce entrepreneur and bag designer
5 million followers on Weibo

Dior contract, the three band members have all earned mega-sponsorship deals with brands including L'Oréal and Bottega Veneta. When brands switch sponsorship from one celebrity to another, the respective fan clubs go to war on Chinese social media.

Amid this frenzied action, Weibo plays a huge role. As the platform to recruit and interact with fans, it has helped Chinese celebrities build their fanbases. In return, celebrities are more than happy to help Weibo drive more traffic to the site and so strengthen it in its fight against its competitors such as WeChat.

The difference between Weibo and WeChat is more or less the difference between making a speech at Tiananmen Square or in your living room. Weibo allows a free flow of traffic to browse your content whereas WeChat is based around groups, like WhatsApp. Of course, Weibo also has the advantage of having Taobao – the world's biggest e-commerce website – as a shareholder, increasing its ability to shape its social-media platform for commercial purposes.

Taobao has the lion's share of the fashion e-commerce market, so Weibo has become the display window for the world's largest virtual mall. Which makes Wang the decision-maker about what goes in the mall's shop windows and his editor Yuki the window dresser.

Last year at the Cannes Film Festival, I hosted a series of interviews with Chinese celebrities who were all spokespersons for various L'Oréal products. These interviews were first aired on e-commerce sites such as Tmall.com, JD.com and VIP.com, with direct onscreen links to products provided for the viewers. By the end of the festival, nearly $6 million in revenue had been raised by this celebrity content.

Brands are increasingly either creating content themselves or collaborating with platforms to use celebrities to push sales. Indeed, this has proven to be the most effective way of marketing to millennials in China today. 'There is a difference between the content we create and those created by stars and influencers. We consider ourselves as media and check our content as strictly as any print publication,' says Yuki. 'Influencers and stars are much more about opinion and taste, whereas we are news.'

It is true – Sina is all about news. It was formed in 1998 in California when a news website and a technology company merged to form sina.com, a Chinese-language news service that aimed to provide news to the Chinese diaspora around the world, and sina.cn, a news website for mainland China. Its rise to prominence began in 2001, strangely brought about by the 9/11 tragedy in New York. At that time, traditional media were barred from reporting major news until a 'party line' had been handed down by the Ministry of Propaganda. So as 9/11 happened in real time on sina.cn, all traditional

media including radio, television and print were left waiting for word from high above. The result was that the Chinese public headed to sina.cn and made it the premier news website in the country.

Since then, Sina has been at the forefront of pushing the boundaries of the Internet in China. In 2005, it launched Sina Blog, the first user-generated-content platform in China. It made writers like Han Han overnight stars and became an important liberal voice in Chinese society. It also made me a blogger, albeit unwillingly at first. I was dead against user-generated content and wrote about it in a magazine. Unfortunately, a popular blogger picked up the article, and before I knew it I had an empty Sina Blog page with more than 4,000 comments condemning me as a snob. It was the power of the Internet. There is nothing like a whole bunch of hateful eyeballs to make you start explaining yourself. Four years later, in 2009, Sina launched Weibo, its micro-blogging site. It was an instant hit, the first real-time social-media platform in China. I joined Weibo in its testing phase, and it quickly became a hotbed for liberal social opinion. Needless to say, when it was finally fully launched, it became not only a forum for liberal democratic commentaries, but also the platform for Chinese to air their grievances against government policies and officials. It was also a place for rumours and otherwise forbidden news in China. When human-rights activist Liu Xiaobo won the Nobel Prize in 2010, for example, Chinese heard about it on Weibo, nowhere else.

Weibo soon became a problem for the Communist Party, which by 2014 considered it a menace and a source of possible social unrest in China. The Party appointed a new Internet tsar, Lu Wei. He was determined to clean up Weibo, and one of the first things he did was to organize a dinner for major Weibo influencers. I was there. The conversation was a weird dance between the censor and those he wanted to censor. Throughout the dinner, no one said anything close to the truth; Lu Wei splattered opaque warnings and threats, while the rest of us uttered insincere support for his efforts to clean up the Chinese Internet. Within two months, one of the dinner guests had been detained for soliciting prostitutes, the arrest in a shabby brothel broadcast on national television. He was also made to confess his 'crimes' on the same station. Which was when Weibo went very quiet. Later, as other influencers were censored and their accounts cancelled, many more users started leaving Weibo. Meanwhile, WeChat was taking over as the premier social-media platform in China, and hosting the first generation of fashion influencers such as Gogoboy, Libeika and Mr. Bao (also known as Mr. Bags – who in 2018 sold over $500,000 worth of co-branded Tod's bags in six minutes).

Today, if you ask the people at Sina the difference between WeChat and Weibo, the answer they'll give is 'content'. Weibo, they say, is content driven and Sina people see themselves as content people. Wang Yi said that when he first became involved with fashion content, he realized that fashion, art and lifestyle were all linked and interwoven: 'It is the link that makes the story interesting and creates attention.' To this day, Wang says he is more a media guy than anything else; he considers himself a content curator. On the other hand, to those at Sina, WeChat's owner Tencent is about pure technology, its content driven by algorithms and big data, all to maximize profit.

Thanks in part to Wang Yi and his team, Weibo is once again a popular platform on which to promote fashion and lifestyles. 'Our mission is to provide the most accurate information about fashion products and the most interesting fashion opinions,' says Yuki. 'But new media is tech driven, so we are also preparing to launch a new product that will allow China's millennials to move seamlessly between fashion information, opinion and product. This will be the new thing.'

This new app on which Yuki has been working for the past year is designed for today's China: 'We have found that the gap in fashion taste between first-tier cities and third- and fourth-tier cities is closing. There is as much appetite for luxury and fashion in smaller cities in China as in major metropolitan areas.'

'Isn't it kind of sad that you guys were like the *New York Times* and now you are just a commercial platform?' I asked.

'So what, Amazon owns the *Washington Post*,' a junior Sina editor retorted.

She was right, it was a different age, and Sina has moved on.

'As a KOL, my influence depends on whether my followers love and support me. In the past, I didn't manage that so well and I know that our interactions on Weibo and WeChat were decreasing. Some people noticed, even sending me messages saying they felt I was drifting further away from them. Since then I've made sure to rebuild and maintain my fan base, even asking their opinions of things.'

Anny Fan
Fashion KOL living in Shanghai and New York
4 million followers on Weibo

'I am now addicted to social media. Every day before I go to sleep, I go through WeChat, Weibo, Little Red Book, Instagram, and sometimes, YouTube.'

Mr. Bags
KOL, e-commerce entrepreneur and bag designer
5 million followers on Weibo

Fashion weak

Surviving the shows with a broken foot.
By Robin Givhan. Illustration by Jean-Philippe Delhomme

I broke my foot in January 2019. I was skipping using an extra-thick, weighted rope to increase the challenge. I was going fast and feeling invincible when I missed a step and landed on the rope. My foot twisted as I came down and it was quite the spectacular break. Surgery. Pins. A giant orthopaedic boot. Crutches. And then came fashion month.

I spent 10 days in New York hobbling about in my boot and leaning on a crutch. I spent another week in Paris wearing sneakers and Birkenstocks and praying that no one trampled on my stubbornly swollen, sometimes throbbing foot as we were herded in and out of shows. I also learned several things about my colleagues, the fashion industry, human nature, Uber and taxi drivers.

I would not have been able to cover the collections had it not been for the kindness of the people in this industry. How I was given a seat – sorta, kinda – backstage at Tomo Koizumi's wonderful New York debut because the actual show space was down a daunting flight of steps. Or how at Tory Burch, I had a special pass that allowed my Uber driver to pull up directly in front of the entrance at Pier 17 instead of the main drop-off point. He was so concerned he was doing something wrong by proceeding past the barricades that I had to encourage him onwards: 'Embrace your privilege!'

Snow, sleet and hail – all on one God-awful day – tested my resolve. It began when I mustered my determination and called an Uber for the four-block trip for my morning appointment at Diane von Furstenberg's offices. I apologized for the short ride and Mr. Uber, shrugged and said, 'No problem. Obviously, you can't walk!'

At DVF, the designer talked me through the collection while voicing concern for my foot. She asked if I had a car and driver. Uh, no. I assured her that Uber would suffice. She was unconvinced. She announced that her driver would take me to my next appointment. No, Diane. Diane. *Diane!* Which is how I came to arrive at the Gabriela Hearst show in the back of Diane von Furstenberg's Bentley. Professional ethics would have me reimburse her for that ride; I have no idea how. So I offer transparency and a thank you. And yes, it was much nicer than an Uber.

When the shows ended, I took the train from New York back to Washington. At Union Station, I rolled my suitcase to the taxi line while balancing on my boot and my crutch. I climbed into a cab and before giving the driver my destination, apologized for the short trip. The driver yelled at me for wasting his time after he'd been waiting in the line of cabs and hoping for a trip across town. New York fashion week didn't reduce me to tears; a DC cabbie did.

In Paris, my injured foot was healed enough for Marni sneakers and Rick Owens Birkenstocks. It's a good fashion moment to have a broken foot. No one needed to know that my footwear choices were based on medical necessity.

On the runway, Thom Browne showcased chunky wingtips. Dior was a world of pointy toed, monk-strap flats. Chloe was full of low-heeled boots. Chanel offered comfy shearling snow boots. I was on trend. And instead of visiting my usual shopping haunts like L'Éclaireur, I discovered Tabio, a deluxe sock shop near Place Saint-Sulpice. I needed fancy socks to go with my Birkenstocks.

While I found the fashion community kind and accommodating, the infrastructure of fashion shows is brutal. In New York, despite the Americans with Disabilities Act, runway presentations are not organized with the disabled in mind – not even the temporarily disabled. Paris is even worse. What if you were older? What if you didn't spend hours cranking up your heart rate at the gym? Elevators are not readily accessible; several venues didn't even have them. Spaces are deliberately darkened, making negotiating uneven floors treacherous. What if there was an emergency? This last round of shows and my broken foot reminded me that inclusivity is about more than just the models on the runway and the executives in the boardroom.

I only succeeded because people went out of their way to help. I felt welcome because I was known, but I was left wondering, how would a newbie in a wheelchair or with a cane fare?

The dark room

What Brexit means to British photography. By Shonagh Marshall. Illustration by Jean-Philippe Delhomme

Since June 2016, when the UK voted to leave the European Union, I have, like so many people, found myself wondering what it means to be British today. So, as a curator of photography, I began to ask other people. Like London-based fashion photographers, Hanna Moon, from South Korea, and Joyce Ng, from Hong Kong, with whom I organized an exhibition, *English as a Second Language*, at Somerset House in London earlier this year. Together we explored what being British means today and how it could be reflected in contemporary fashion imagery.

When Hanna and Joyce read the exhibition brief, they found it both slightly farcical and extremely British. Hanna decided to subvert it by 'invading' Somerset House and posing her muses, Heejin, from South Korea, and Moffy, from London, in various states of undress to parody traditional British (mainly female) portraiture. Joyce on the other hand looked to the international community working in Somerset House itself for inspiration, casting models from among its members. While the resulting images show how differently they both see the idea of being British, they do reveal a common trait. Living in Britain and so 'being British' has allowed them to revel in a degree of self-invention they could never have at home. Indeed, like many of their models, London has let them exist in a whole new way. For them, being British means freedom – the chance to be someone else entirely.

The liberty felt by Joyce and Hannah and their outsiders' view of what the country means is similar to many of the new generation of imagemakers who have come to the fore as increasing numbers of non-British students have arrived in art schools. While these outsiders are creating new identities based on their feelings of living life 'lost in translation', homegrown fashion photographers are also looking at the country in different ways, in their search to discover how it can be re-envisaged.

Rosie Marks, for example, takes the spirit pioneered by Martin Parr, reinterprets it and makes it feel more relevant to now. Her sentimental and tender images comment on British society in a way that can make you reconsider your daily surroundings, picking out the details of the workaday world in photographs that often read as anthropological outings. She brings an empathy and inquisitiveness that leaves you looking for hidden clues; her Instagram feed (@marksrosie) is transformed into a treasure hunt through modern British cultural identity. Where Parr brilliantly captures the occasional, Marks finds poetry in the ordinary, the mundanities of daily life – the usual Friday night down the pub, as opposed to an exclusive day at the races – in a way that seems grounded in just the right way for our moment of national uncertainty.

Another British photographer Sam Rock recently went on a cross-country fashion shoot for *i-D* magazine, which aimed to capture 'the beauty and diversity of Britain today'. Travelling from Dover to Liverpool, the two closest points in mainland Britain to continental Europe, he shot portraits of real people, wearing high fashion or their own clothes, during one of the hottest summers on record in the UK. The result is also a celebration of the quotidian, and an inadvertent political manifesto. It is a quiet chronicle of what happens when an inchoate sense of nostalgia bangs into the reality of a national identity in a state of absolute flux.

All these photographers' obliquely narrative approaches – from Joyce and Hannah's outsider views to Rosie and Sam's sneak peeks from the inside – push you beyond the clothes and leave you asking questions about the 'plot details' of model, clothing and location. Like clues that coalesce into a new narrative, these are stories that tell of ordinary Britain using real people, rather than untenable depictions of beauty with airbrushed models. And that is perhaps the paradox of these new British fashion photographers now: by reflecting back a sense of life being lived, they are giving us fashion not as fantasy, but a dose of reality. And in a country where make-believe seems to have infected the body politic, their down-to-earth vision is perhaps exactly what we need. By showing us the normal in the middle of the uncertainty and possible chaos of Brexit, they are offering us new visions not only of who we are today but who we can still become tomorrow.

The sanitary solution

The underwear manufacturer tackling third-world 'period poverty'. By Dominic McVey. Illustration by Jean-Philippe Delhomme

The period panty project started back in 2013, when I invested in Hela, a Sri Lankan clothing manufacturer. It took proper shape in 2016 when we opened factories for Hela Intimates in Kenya and Ethiopia, where we produce underwear for brands like Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger. In all our factories, we practise sustainable manufacturing that reflects our company's ethos: we provide our employees with meals, accommodation and transport, as well as training that provides transferable skills in machine operation and management, allowing our employees to earn a living wage.

Yet, despite our efforts, I noticed that women of many different ages were lacking help with one hugely important aspect of their lives: their periods. Still a massive taboo in Sri Lanka, Kenya and Ethiopia, periods are considered impure by many communities resulting in millions of women being excluded from social situations, including work and education. In sub-Saharan Africa, 1 in 10 girls will either miss school or drop out entirely due to their period; according to some estimates, they miss 20% of a given school year. In Kenya, 66% of girls cannot afford to buy sanitary products. A staggering 95% of girls in rural Ghana report missing school during their periods, and worldwide, 113 million adolescent girls are at risk of dropping out due to their period. Some girls are given reusable period pads by NGOs, but underwear is needed to hold these in place, which in some cases, is too expensive. So to deal with their periods, millions of women around the world are forced to use non-absorbent pieces of cloth that are unsanitary, leak and cause them embarrassment and shame.

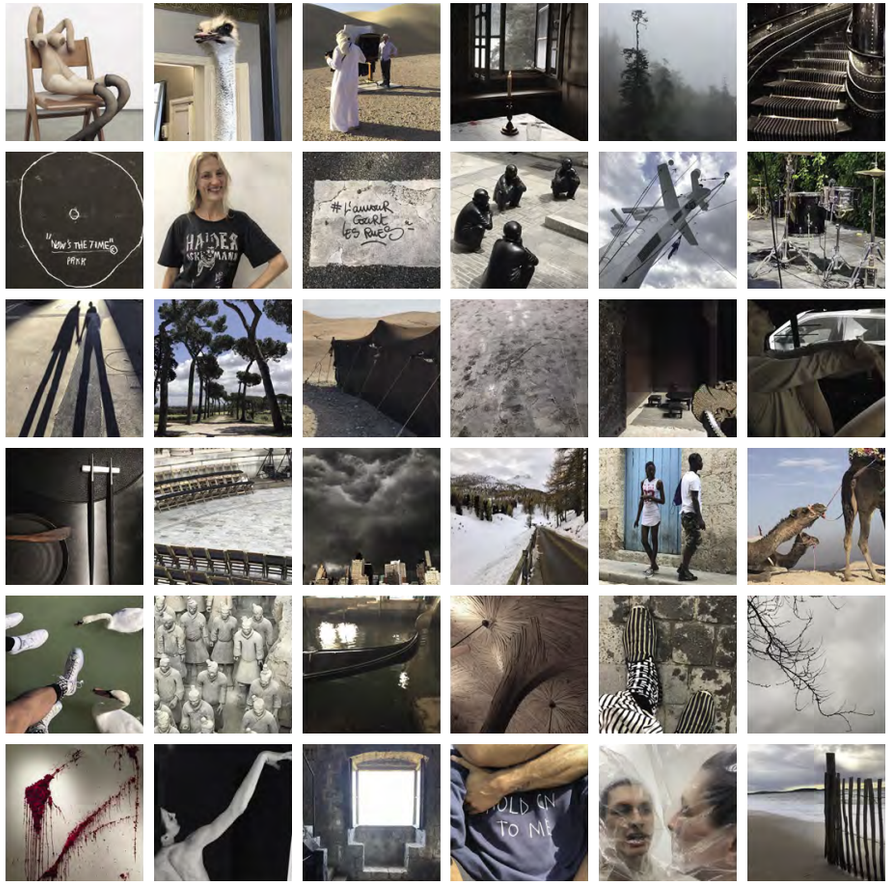
I have seen empty chairs in our offices or on our factory floors because a woman did not come in due to her period. I have seen women running across the canteen with blood where they were stood or sat. I have known our toilets to be occupied for hours or the drains to be clogged by the cloth women have used to absorb the flow and then thrown away. I can only imagine the hardship and mental stress a woman must go through due to lack of community support, education or access to the right products.

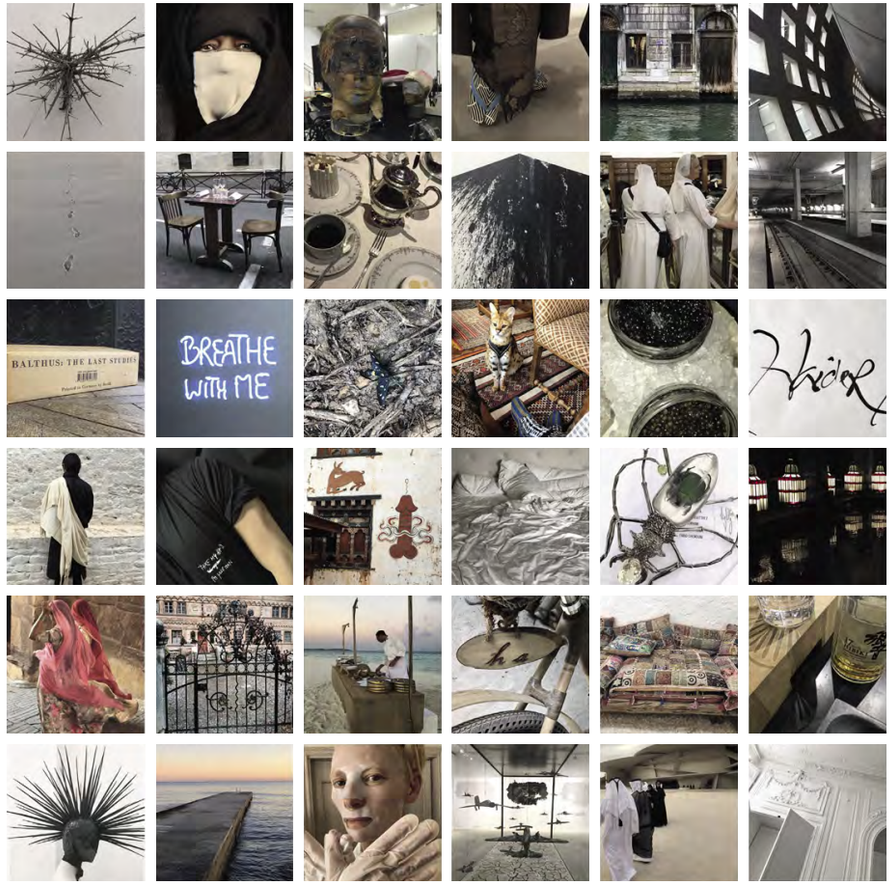
So I decided to work on a solution. From the beginning, I was convinced that the answer was not giving sanitary pads to women. Sanitary pads are a modern solution that is actually outdated, a disposable, environmentally unfriendly product developed by an industry that needs to encourage mass consumption. Products are also developed with Western habits and sanitary situations in mind, far removed from what is required in a rural village in Kenya. What was needed was an alternative that would be cheaper, genuinely reusable, and perfectly discreet.

With assistance from my colleague Buddhi Paranamara at Hela Clothing and with input from Parsons School of Design, we developed a reusable women's panty that can be used as a normal panty and then during menstrual cycles with a heavy flow, or for fistula or urinary incontinence. The panty uses special technology in the lining that makes it super absorbent yet ultra-thin, and stops any chance of leakage. And as it's reusable, it's more environmentally friendly for the planet and more cost-effective for women. We also used our collective experience in garment design and manufacturing to create a panty that, perhaps most importantly, looks just like normal underwear to the eye and touch. Which means women can wash it and hang it out like any other garment, without alerting everyone that they may be on their period. So far, we've produced several thousand period panties, of which we have donated a large number to women in refugee camps across Asia and Africa. With our partners, we hope that we can continue helping women across the world, making their lives easier and in the process helping bring an end to period poverty.

Camera roll

By Haider Ackermann





‘It’s history, place and identity transformed into clothing.’

Grace Wales Bonner is tailoring the future of fashion from her own personal heritage.

By Hans Ulrich Obrist
Photographs by Durimel

Grace Wales Bonner is steadily earning a place in contemporary fashion design's canon – and the reason is simple: she designs extremely wearable clothes, to which she adds a rich creative exploration of her own Caribbean and British identity, spanning age, gender and ethnicity. The natural convergence of these aspects creates a dynamic that has made her work feel so relevant to today. Since founding her label Wales Bonner in 2014, initially to produce only menswear, she has consistently expressed her personal vision of black male identity, history and culture through an academic, sensitive and poetic lens. And while her rise on the global fashion scene has been rapid – she graduated from Central Saint Martins in 2014, won 'Emerging Menswear Designer' at the British Fashion Awards in 2015, and received the LVMH Young Designer Prize in 2016 – she has never allowed that to compromise the technical quality of her precise tailoring.

Wales Bonner is now entering a more considered, nuanced and confident phase of her career, her language now naturally moving beyond the conventional fashion settings of a collection, a show or a campaign. This began with a showcase at the V&A in 2015; her participation in the Transformation Marathon at the Serpentine Galleries the same year; the creation of zines; a creative residency in a remote village in Senegal; collaborations with artists including Sampha, Ishmael Reed, Ben Okri and Lynette Yiadom-Boakye; and a solo exhibition at the Serpentine Sackler Gallery earlier this year. For *System*, she set out on another visual exploration and collaboration: with twin brothers and photographers Jalan and Jibril Durimel, she travelled to Guadeloupe, shooting a story that represents an emblematic expression of her continuous questioning of identity, place, history, ethnicity and magic. A few weeks before the journey, the Serpentine Galleries' artistic director Hans Ulrich Obrist sat down with Grace Wales Bonner to unravel the roots of her process, her brand's already rich history, and to take a look into its future.

Hans Ulrich Obrist: How did fashion and art come to you, or how did you come to fashion and art?
Grace Wales Bonner: It was quite a gradual process. I have always been interested in history, identity and representation, which comes a lot through literature and photography, as well as working with archival material. I've always been looking to recognize a lineage within images. At school and then at Central Saint Martins, I wasn't sure if I wanted to be an artist or a designer. At Saint Martins, taking the fashion pathway puts you on the spot; if you want to do fashion, you kind of get funnelled immediately into a specific way of working. The pace of it was interesting to me, so I went with that option. While I have worked with fashion, I have also been nurturing myself with representation and literature. I have found a way to balance those two points of reference and integrate them into my work. Fashion feels like a way I can explore deeper ideas about identity, ancestors, lineage, and connect to different temporalities. I came to realize through studying that by creating imagery and collections, I can communicate in a really immediate way.

What about influences? Who inspires you in fashion?
Coco Chanel. I'm interested in heritage, tradition, and tailoring, and there are a lot of core codes within Chanel that I see as representing the height of French craftsmanship; she has always been an inspiration. Miuccia Prada, also. Just the way she reflects contemporary society like a mirror. She is always responding to the times we live in, in a very deep, soulful, and philosophical way. I think she continues to create really strong collections.

Who else?
In menswear, Raf Simons. His work has been groundbreaking and such an important reference for where fashion is today.

What makes him groundbreaking for you?
The intimacy and the way he engages and grapples with very specific subcultures and can communicate it all in an immediate way. He seems very uncompromising and it is a really beautiful thing to see in this era.

Anyone else?
Craig Green. We crossed over at Saint Martins; his work is incredible. The special thing about London is that people from different generations in the fashion world are very supportive of each other. Kiko Kostadinov's work is amazing, too;[1] he was in my class at Saint Martins. It is just really exciting to see this kind of energy.

Samuel Ross?[2]
It's so impressive how he has navigated the system and just accelerated with such strong convictions. It's exciting. I think there's a lot of potential at this time.

And what is it about London with its teachers and mentors? Do you think it is still about the spirit of Saint Martins and Louise Wilson?[3]
I think so, in the sense that the work of the people I just mentioned is very much a product of that education system. It's what I'm excited about in menswear: there are already established structures in place, so to go into that world and create something new is almost unexpected.

You didn't study with Louise Wilson like Craig Green, but did you have any mentors?
I had encounters with Louise Wilson at Saint Martins; they were interesting and shaped how I thought about things. But in terms of fashion I don't know if I have had mentors. I've always gravitated towards people from other fields who can inform the way I work; I like to hear from an outside perspective. It's often a writer or an artist or a musician.

Who were your main inspirations outside the fashion world?
Writers often become the starting point of many things for me, the work of Ben Okri, Kei Miller, Ishmael Reed, Essex Hemphill, and Fred Moten.[4] Or Thelonious Monk, who I think about in the way he deconstructs forms, intonation and scale. I'm often drawn to people who can elegantly disrupt systems, like Ishmael Reed, Ben Okri and Monk, and bring a new sense of rhythm to creation. I think there's some synchronicity among all these things.

Can we talk about the next beginning, when you left Saint Martins and designed your first collection?
My graduate collection was called *Afrique*. It explored Blaxploitation[5] and the turning point of black expression in the 1970s, especially in terms of photography and film-making. *Ebonics* was the first collection after I graduated[6] and was connected to a broader spectrum of representation. I was looking for sensual and beautiful representations of black masculinity across different time frames. I was thinking about the Harlem Renaissance,[7] and the idea of black genius. I was attempting to connect to a deep and rich world, one that linked to many different histories and times. I started working with cowrie shells[8] in the embroideries, so it was also thinking about different ideas of cultural currency and how you integrate these different signifying elements. That collection was starting to explore an idea of hybridity and the meeting point between certain couture and craft techniques.

Can you talk a bit about your early collaborations?
With the first collection, it was about finding boys who were part of my community who could be models. About finding a group of inspiring men who I felt represented the image of black masculinity that was more familiar to me, and which I didn't feel was being represented in fashion.

So casting was very important?
Totally, and it was very close to the development process. Wilson Oryema,[9] who must have been 17 then, was in the studio the whole time trying things on and telling us how he felt. The way things developed was very organic and conversational. The idea of how I cast was established with that collection really.

That leads us to the second collection in which these collaborations became more marked.
It was called *Malik* and in it I was exploring the life of Malik Ambar, an Ethiopian slave who moved to India in the 16th century. That was Spring/Summer 2016. That was very much about cross-pollination of worlds, and my reflections on the narrative connections between Africa and India. I was making connections between Nollywood and Bollywood and trying to find links over different times between these places. In that show, which was presented at the ICA in London, I worked with M.J. Harper, a close friend who used to dance with the Alvin Ailey company, and has worked with Wayne McGregor.[10] The first few collections were very much about sampling and referencing different histories, through collage and different literary sources I'd collected for the publications I was

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'I'm drawn to people like Ishmael Reed, Ben Okri and Thelonious Monk who elegantly disrupt systems and bring a new rhythm to creation.'

working on. This approach was also explored through sound. James William Blades[11] worked on the soundscape interweaving field recordings from my time in Senegal and India along with other historical and found sources. The idea of collaboration became central to how I developed collections. In 2015, I spent a month in a small, remote village in northern Senegal just working on collage. At the end of that, I realized that to create I need to work with other people. Being in isolation doesn't work for me; that's not how things happen for me. I was much more proactive after that, reaching out to people I admired and just starting a dialogue.

So, you had an epiphany in Senegal: you needed to work more with people, in dialogue, as an exchange. Then you came back and created a collection.
That was *Spirituals II* for Autumn/Winter 2017. Thanks to your introduction, I got in touch with Lynette Yiadom-Boakye[12] who I commissioned to write a text.

You were thinking about the street at the time. I brought you and Lynette together because I felt it was urgent. She is an outstanding artist, but what is much less known is her literature; she is also an amazing short-story writer. She started to write for you about the idea of the street preachers, right?
One of the points to mention is *Invisible Man*.[13] There's a moment in the novel when one of the characters is in the street and interacts with people who are gathering – and through his actions he changes the way everyone else interacts. I was thinking about the street and sound in the street, and how that informs the way that people behave, about spaces like Notting Hill Carnival and how sounds in public spaces have transformed communities. I had this body of visual research about street characters over time. It was a broad gathering of people from different eras, from a Renaissance friar to Senegalese street style, but there was a collective style. I showed Lynnette my research and she responded to it, understood what I was talking about, and wrote this incredible text. That was also when I also worked with Elysia Crampton,[14] who created an amazing sound piece which, again, was very much about sampling and referencing different histories. That was a point when I was starting to connect with artists; I was expanding and opening up to the potential of what my work could be. Sampha also contributed to that soundtrack. I was seeing research as a tool to communicate with other artists and to create a broader picture. That has been a tool I've continued to use – always having a body of research that I can send to people.

With the next collection, *Blue Duets* for Spring/Summer 2018, there was an intensity in the relationships between the people in it. Can you talk about M.J. Harper's choreography of that show?
It's really interesting working with M.J. because he works out how to express physically the ideas I'm exploring, and he can do very subtle things to express something very important. There is a real tenderness between the characters, and I'm always interested in this softness, sensuality and this gentle way of engaging and being. After that show I spent some time with Sampha in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

That journey to Freetown was important to you.
I went the day after my show, together with Jalan and Jibril Durimel.[15] I often commission other people to create work in relation to my work, but it is also interesting when I have to respond to another artist's work. In that case, I was responding to *Process*, Sampha's incredible album, which won the Mercury Prize.[16] I was thinking about how to visually respond to that album, and so I had this idea of making a publication with the Durimels. I also worked on some collages for Sampha, which used a lot of his found archival imagery from his family. Having access to that and going to where his family is from was a very intimate, close-up process. It was a very important trip for us all. Kahlil Joseph[17] was working on a film for *Process* as well, so it was a really great time, a meeting point for some really important artists. Seeing Kahlil's working process was really inspiring, too. Film has always been a part of what I do and how I present collections, but to see it on that scale was really interesting.

There was a moment when some fashion designers started to replace fashion shows with films. But the way you use them is different. How do you connect to films?

'I have always thought a lot about soulful dressing or emotional dressing, thinking about a real intimacy and closeness to the body.'

I see them as an extension of the research process, one that informs later work and collections. One of the first films I did was with Harley Weir,[18] after the *Ebonics* collection. We spent some time in Dakar doing a documentary about Senegalese wrestling and spent time with this community of wrestlers. What they do is very physical, and we were trying to represent a tenderness between these men and how certain elements of feminine expression were integrated into how they behaved or even what they wore. I was noticing a lot of men wearing sarongs or women's swimming costumes, but they didn't have the same gender stereotypes. They were more like found items appropriated for a different use. I have always been interested in seeing ideas that in my mind are very romanticized and then coming back and filming them in a real place. Then I can see what comes out of that and how it can be developed further. For the *Malik* collection, we went to Udaipur, Delhi and Gujarat to meet a group of Siddi, an African-Indian community. The whole process is about coming back to a place and examining an idea through a different space. In 2017, I went to Johannesburg and Cape Town with Harley and we worked on a film with a young ballet dancer called Leroy Mokgatle.[19] It was a film about exploring dance in South Africa. Film has been a really important part of my work. It complements the collections, but it is also a really active research process.

The research also gets compressed and summarized in your zines. One of the more recent was with Sampha in Sierra Leone. Tell me about these zines' role and how you make them.
I see the whole zine as a collage and a way of referencing different voices, history and literature. It's about collecting all these different narratives together to create this unique world, bringing disparate things together in a dialogue.

You have been inspired by Caribbean modernism and thinking about how that transcribes to an aesthetic end, and that's become part of your research.
I am very considerate of each place, but I also have a network of people around the world with whom I am in a dialogue. So it is about being responsive and intuitive to your environment an d also being engaged in a wider conversation. I enjoy sincerity and intimacy, and closeness to the process of making. I have always thought a lot about soulful dressing or emotional dressing, thinking about a real closeness to the body, and I think that doing things on my scale, I have a lot more control over that.

About how it is produced? Being a designer with her own successful brand is obviously about creating important and memorable work, but it's also about maintaining an economy that supports a team structure. Do you see a successful business as about creating a global whole rather than an expression of homogenized globalisation?
I do think it is definitely vital to balance important creative expression with commercial considerations. There is a good support network in London that helps designers develop, but it is still something that I continue to work around and explore.

What would you do if you were to get a phone call from a label offering a great opportunity? Would you ever sell your label or do you want to stay autonomous? Do you want Grace Wales Bonner shops?
I am definitely interested in having my own space and my own store; that is an ambition of mine. I am interested in the idea of an institution and fashion having parameters. A house with heritage is interesting to me, because I am interested in a framework and then disrupting elements of classicism within that. A dream of mine would be to work with a tailoring brand, as that is at the core of what I am doing.

'A dream of mine would be to work with a brand like Hermès or even a Savile Row tailoring house, as that is at the core of what I am doing.'

What is your favourite, if you could choose one?
Maybe a brand like Hermès or even a Savile Row tailoring house.

We didn't talk about the essential collaboration with Dev Hynes.[20]
Dev was involved in *Practice*, the film that I did in Johannesburg with Harley and Leroy Mokgatle; he composed the soundtrack. He was interested in South African house music, so he was also responding to that. We meet every six months or so, whenever I am in New York or he is in London. But we often cross over in terms of research and ideas and also this idea of gentle masculinity; he really does embody that and I know that collaboration for him is such an ingrained part of his practice. He is so responsive and equipped to collaborate

with other people. That is why it is such a pleasure to work with him; it is such a part of what he does every day.

Sometimes you also collaborate with the dead, like you did with Gary Fisher,[21] who was a reference for your Spring/Summer 2018 collection. You used his notebooks, which were published in 1994 after his death from AIDS. You said it was the idea of leading a double life like a spy that interested you, the idea that you have to be an infiltrator.
For that, I was talking to Fred Moten, who was at school with Gary Fisher. Fred told me that when the notebooks were revealed it was such a shock because Gary had been such a quiet guy at university. But he had this very complex inner life, which is very interesting.

Winter 2018 collection, *Des Hommes et des Dieux*, I also worked with archival materials, that time with Jacob Lawrence's imagery in clothing.[25] I'm interested in how you can integrate images into clothing and talk about histories.

Before we talk about the Serpentine show and the latest collection, which go together, could you maybe tell us about your first Serpentine collaboration? We met in 2015.
I remember having a meeting in this office and I brought you the zine *Everythings* [sic] *for Real*.

And then we invited you to take part in the 2015 Transformation Marathon.[26] That led to something that wasn't fashion or exhibition, but performances you also called *Everythings for Real*.

another way of performing. That performance was very intimate.

Is this Serpentine show, *A Time for New Dreams*,[27] the first time that you have actually curated an exhibition?
Yes, this is new for me. Lots of strands have been part of my artistic practice for a long time – the research, the histories and bringing together collaborators in dialogue – so there is continuity, but I've never had the opportunity to be in a space for a longer period of time. To be able to present something over the course of months as opposed to one day is really interesting, being able to stretch time and yet be present in a space for a period.

Tell me a little about the show's title, which is taken from Ben Okri.[28] How

'Even though it seems like a difficult moment, it is a time to really connect, to talk to a community. It is time to embrace and encourage each other.'

For that collection, *Blue Duets*, I was thinking about homoerotic literature, but also about a character with a utilitarian job, but who also has a social life. It connects to *Looking for Langston*[22] and the Harlem Renaissance. He has a wardrobe for the day and then a night-time wardrobe, which is a lot more sensual. It was about these restrictions in tailoring based around something very minimal and utilitarian, but which was also able to communicate a sort of softness. That was also the collection where I integrated some imagery from Carl Van Vechten's series of homoerotic photography,[23] as well as an image from Chris Ofili's *Blue Riders*.[24] It was about exploiting the idea of a blue mood through art and literature, and it became a meeting point of these different things. For the Autumn/

For that you collaborated with the extraordinary Moussa Dembele and Moussa Dembele, who are like twins but aren't really, from Burkina Faso. Can you tell us a bit about this first event at the Serpentine?
I was interested in the Transformation Marathon and I remember meeting Moussa in London. He was a street performer and seeing him made me think about transformation and how we could present that in another space. So we got talking and I was interested in him performing and then I also asked him if he knew other people. Online I had found another balafon player and Moussa said that he knew him. So we managed to get him here as well. I created costumes for that performance and I instructed them how to play. I don't come from a musical background, but I was thinking about

did you come to the title and the idea of the altar, the ritual, the procession?
It all comes from research. One of my starting points was Robert Farris Thompson's book *Face of the Gods*, which explores altars and connects rites and forms of spirituality, and how that is manifested across the black Atlantic. I was looking at the strength of that, and how African-American artists interpret ideas of spirituality and magic. It connects through a wider lineage of aesthetic practices, so it is about tracing those threads. From that very specific research point, it expanded, opening up dialogues with other artists who consider how we reflect on where we are and what came before.

Besides Ben Okri, another inspiration was Ishmael Reed, a great writer. You

named your Autumn/Winter 2019 collection, which will be presented in the exhibition, after *Mumbo Jumbo*, his 1972 experimental novel about race in the United States. It is set in 1920s New York, and encompasses voodoo, jazz music, and white supremacy, while politically subverting these artefacts with magical realism. What was Reed's influence on the show and how will the exhibition lead into your new show?
I am really interested in the way his writing has a magic-realist potential; it is complicated, layered and evolving. That kind of shuffling and 'rhythmizing', I also see in my roots in terms of rhythmizing textiles. Ishmael's own wardrobe and the clothes worn by black intellectuals come into my collection, and I think the space creates an environment in which characters that I have imagined live. It connects to traditions of storytelling, oracles and oral cultures and passing on through generations. Writers like Ben Okri have really important roles to play in connecting people with this rich history, magical history, and I think that in the time we are living in, it is important to acknowledge these guides.

The *Mumbo Jumbo* collection brings together many of your research threads that are also part of the exhibition. How do these characters fit in and create the world of your collection, this polyphony?
There are two sets of characters, one is the black genius who is under-

represented, and the other is neo-hoodoo idea of the artist as shaman.

There is also the idea of how you use fashion as a medium to tell stories. You invent these characters, like a play. How does this storytelling relate to performance?
We often talk about the subtlety of gesture, very simple things that one can do to disrupt a flow of what is expected. When I think about characters, it is about them owning their space and the world they inhabit, and for them not to be conscious of an audience.

All your collections address black masculinity, and using your research, you draw upon certain histories or narratives. Tell us a little bit more about this big theme and how your research into it has evolved and where it is going next.
At the core of everything I do is research – that is the core of my collections, and fashion is one outlet through which I explore those ideas. Black masculinity is a subject I have continued to study. It is not a fleeting interest; it is something integrated into my work. I am starting to think more about the Caribbean, a place where I need to spend more time, and with this collection, I have also been researching more about Haitian voodoo practices. I'm excited about going to Guadeloupe with the Durimel brothers to shoot the pictures that will accompany this interview. I feel an urgency to be in that space and at the same time I want

to spend some time in Trinidad as well. It seems like I am being gravitationally pulled to Caribbean islands, so that is exciting for the next step.

What are you looking to do in Guadeloupe?
The shoot will be very much a reaction to the island. I am grateful that the twins partly grew up there and have so many memories of Guadeloupe. They have told me so much about it. I think it is going to be about memory and places on the island and communicating connections with the water and spirituality in that space. They talked to me about the different traditions, the ceremonies, processions and masquerades that are very specific to Guadeloupe, which I am really interested in researching more.

How do you feel about the future? Are you optimistic?
A special energy came with me into the new year, and among my peers as well; I saw there was this optimism. The environment around us is very harsh, but I think that there is space for hope in this time, and I think that the younger generation really needs to be part of maintaining that and connecting people. I think it is really important to be rooted in this time and to acknowledge what has come before, but also what is happening in this moment. Even though it seems a difficult moment, it is a time to really connect, to talk to a community. It is time to embrace and encourage each other.

Momentum

1. Kiko Kostadinov is currently creative director at Mackintosh.

2. Samuel Ross is the founder and designer of the label A-COLD-WALL*.

3. Louise Wilson was course director of the Fashion Design MA at Central Saint Martins from 1992 until her death, aged 52, in 2014. During her tenure, graduates from the course included Alexander McQueen, Kim Jones, Craig Green, Phoebe Philo, and Jonathan Saunders.

4. Ben Okri is a Nigerian writer whose magical-realist novel *The Famished Road* won renowned British literary award, the Booker Prize, in 1991, making him the youngest-ever winner; Kei Miller is a Jamaican poet, novelist and essayist; Ishmael Reed is a writer, poet, novelist, playwright and editor born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in 1938; Essex Hemphill was an American poet and activist who died aged 38 of an AIDS-related illness in 1995; Fred Moten is a poet and currently a professor at New York University.

5. The founding film of the cinematic genre known as Blaxploitation is generally accepted to be Melvin Van Peebles' *Sweet Sweetback's Badasssss Song*, released in 1971. Like later films in the genre, such as *Shaft* (1971) and *Super Fly* (1972), Van Peebles' film proved controversial with both black and white audiences and was accused of perpetuating racial stereotypes. The film and the genre were, however, welcomed by many political black activists, including Black Panther Huey P. Newton who wrote in the organization's newspaper that *Sweet Sweetback's* was 'the first truly revolutionary Black film made'.

6. Autumn/Winter 2015

7. The Harlem Renaissance was a US literary movement based in New York City in the 1920s, which is seen as an early manifestation of African-American cultural and political consciousness. Its most celebrated members were writers Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston.

8. Cowrie shells were widely used across Africa and parts of Asia for hundreds of years as a widely accepted currency, one based on the same principles as those used for coins. Or as one Dutch trader wrote in 1747: 'these shells … are accounted current money, with a value assigned to them. This is established by a reciprocal consent, and those who are pleased to show a contempt of them do not reflect that shells are as fit for a common standard of pecuniary value as either gold or silver.'

9. Wilson Oryema is a multidisciplinary artist working in various media; he published a book entitled *Wait* in 2017.

10. African-American dancer Alvin Ailey was a pioneering dancer and choreographer who, in 1958, founded his dance company, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. His work often explored political themes such as South African apartheid and his memories of growing up in segregated small-town Texas. He died aged 58 in 1989. Wayne McGregor is a British dancer and choreographer known for his innovative work, often in collaboration with artists from other disciplines. He runs the company Studio Wayne McGregor and has been resident choreographer at the Royal Ballet in London since 2006.

11. James William Blades is a London based composer, producer and sound artist who worked with Senegalese musicians to produce music for Wales Bonner.

12. Lynette Yiadom-Boakye is a British painter and writer of Ghanaian descent; she was nominated for the prestigious Turner Prize in 2013.

13. First published in 1952, Ralph Ellison's novel *Invisible Man* uses its anonymous narrator's life story to relate the African-American experience in both the American South and New York. It was widely praised upon publication, with Saul Bellow writing that it was 'an immensely moving novel and it has greatness'.

14. Elysia Crampton is an American-Bolivian electronic musician, producer, poet and composer; she identifies as Aymaran and transgender.

15. Photographers Jalan and Jibril Durimel are twin brothers, born in Paris to parents from Guadeloupe, who aged four, moved to Miami. Their work is inspired by their cultural roots in the French Antilles and the USA.

16. Named after a now-defunct telephone company, the Mercury Prize has been awarded annually since 1992 to the best album of the year by a British or Irish act. It is known both for helping raise the profile and sales of artists, and for the jury's sometimes eccentric choices. For example, Gomez's *Bring It On* won in 1998, ahead of Massive Attack's *Mezzanine*, while Ms. Dynamite's *A Little Deeper* was chosen in 2002. Sampha's *Process* won in 2017, beating albums by Ed Sheeran, The xx, and alt-J.

17. American filmmaker Kahlil Joseph has shot music videos for Sampha, Kendrick Lamar and Flying Lotus. He made the original version of Beyoncé's 'Lemonade' video.

18. Harley Weir is a London-based photographer and director.

19. Leroy Mokgatle is a South African ballet dancer. In 2015, he won the Royal Ballet's Genée International Ballet Competition aged 15, and the celebrated Prix de Lausanne in 2016, winning a scholarship to train at the Dutch National Ballet Academy.

20. Dev Hynes is a British singer, songwriter and producer who records under the name of Blood Orange.

21. Gay African-American writer Gary Fisher's work remained unpublished during his lifetime, but a collected volume, *Gary In Your Pocket*, made up of his notebooks, journals and poems, was released in 1996. Fisher died of an AIDS-related illness in 1994 aged 32.

22. The feature film *Looking for Langston* (1989) is described by the website of its director, experimental British filmmaker Isaac Julien, as 'a landmark in the exploration of artistic expression, the nature of desire and the reciprocity of the gaze, and would become the hallmark of what B. Ruby Rich named New Queer Cinema'.

23. American writer Carl Van Vechten (1880-1964) is seen as a patron of the Harlem Renaissance, publishing a roman à clef about the scene in 1926 with the even-then controversial title of *Nigger Heaven*. He is perhaps best known today for his homoerotic photography and as being Gertrude Stein's literary executor.

24. *Blue Riders* is a series of paintings in blue and silver created by British artist Chris Ofili after he moved to Trinidad in 2005.

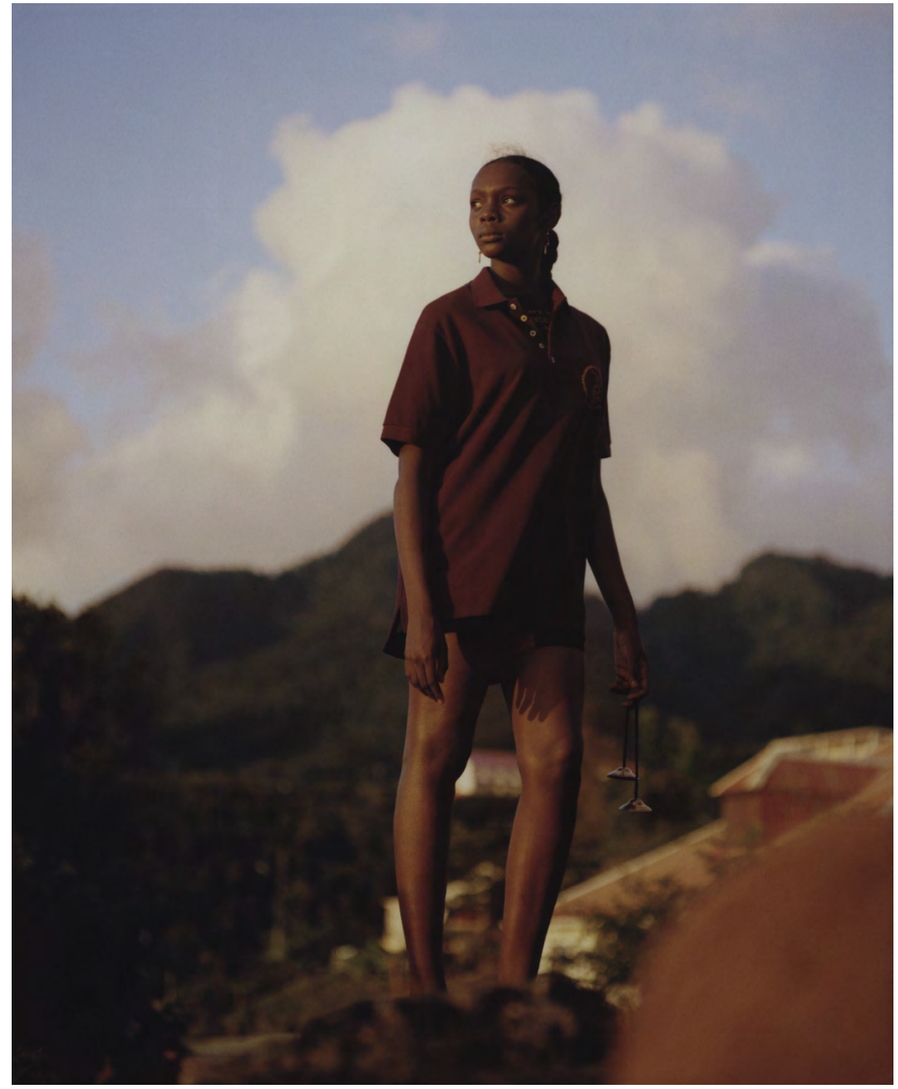
25. Jacob Lawrence (1917-2000) was an African-American painter and teacher. He remains best known for his 1940 commissioned work, *The Great Migration*, a 60-panel epic painting about African-American experience, created when he was just 23.

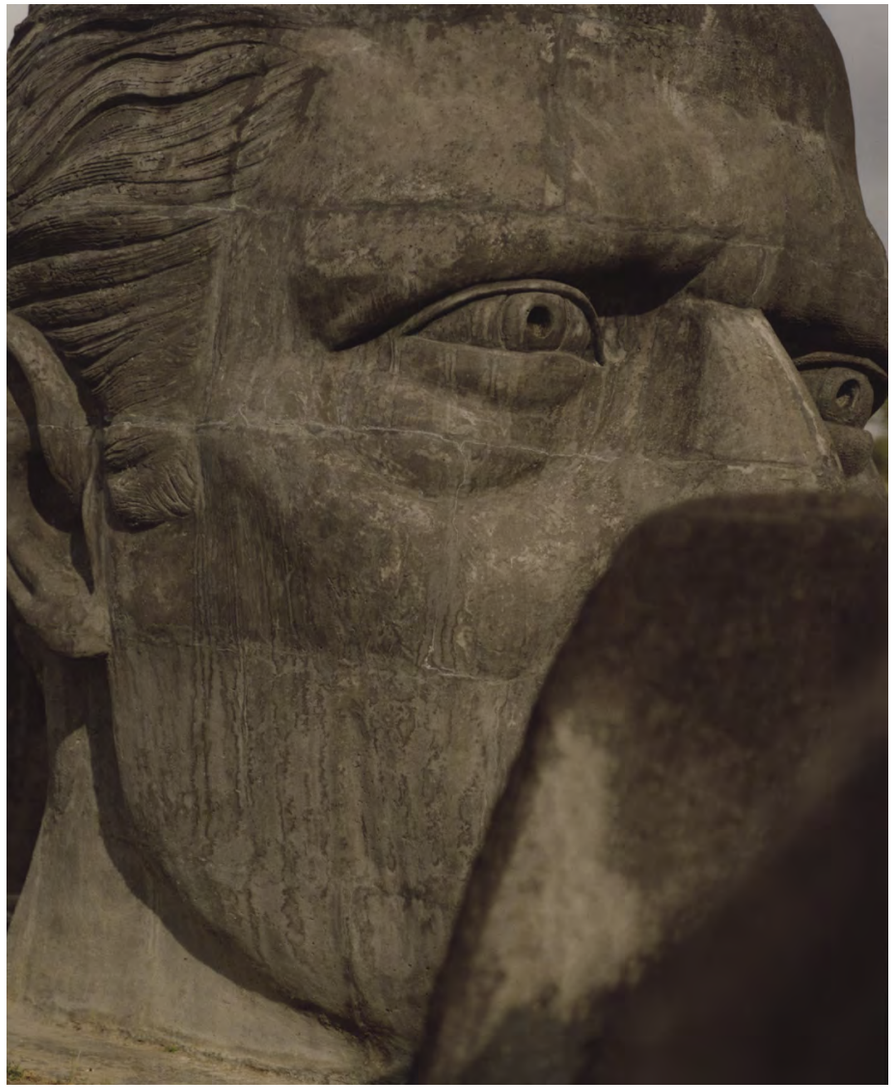
26. The Serpentine Galleries, where Hans Ulrich Obrist is artistic director, hold annual Marathons, 12-hour events of discussions and talks about key contemporary issues.

27. Grace Wales Bonner's *A Time for New Dreams* was curated by Claude Adjil and Joseph Constable and held at the Serpentine Sackler Gallery from 19 January-17 March, 2019.

28. The title is taken from Ben Okri's 2011 collection of 22 essays, *A Time for New Dreams*.

All clothes: Wales Bonner, *Ecstatic Recital* collection, Spring/Summer 2019.





HERE
3347

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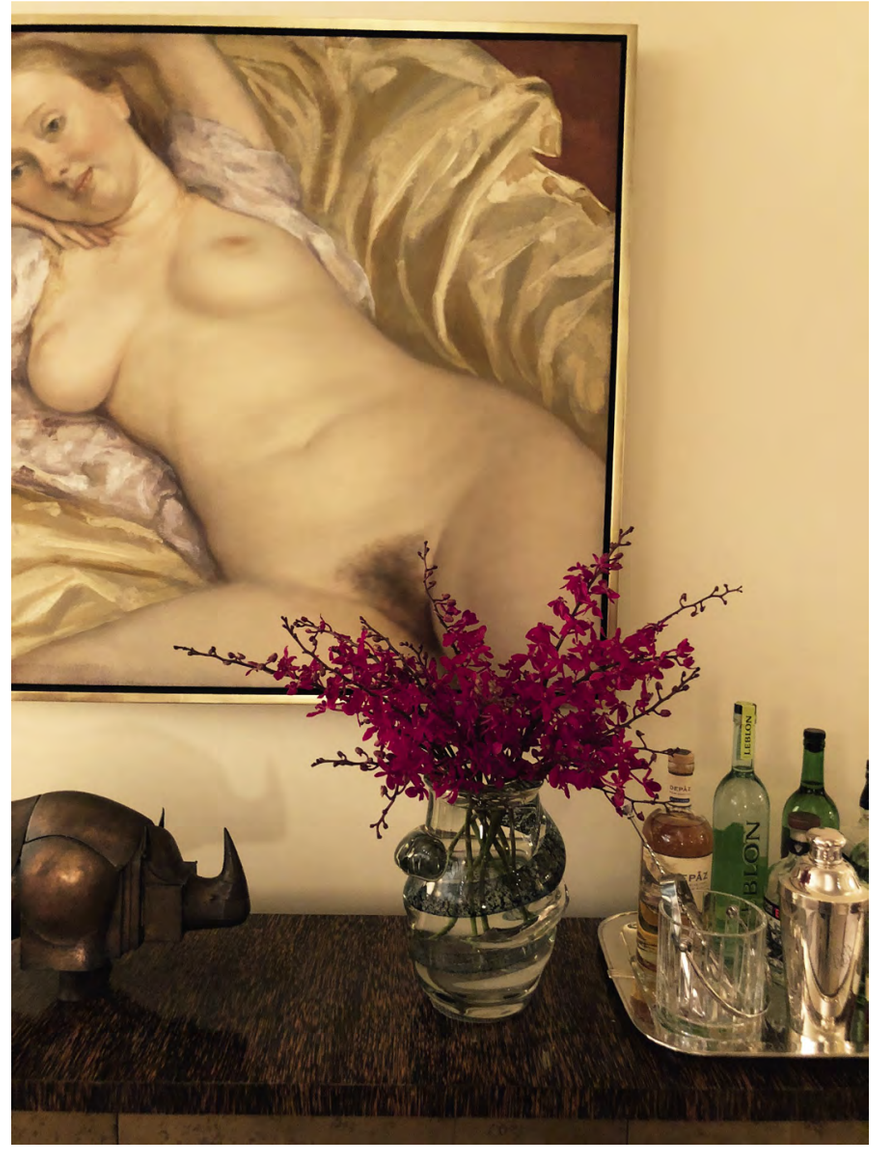
Production: CLM US and Francis McKenzie. Casting: Sydney Bowen.
Models: Romaine Dixon and Christine Willis @ Saint Models, Dhayjanire Louisanneau. Special thanks to Rana Toofanian.

‘I feel we’re missing a little bit of “fashion”.’

With so much focus today on the diminishing size of Marc Jacobs’ business, *System* asks the (almost taboo) question: does it actually matter if the clothes sell? Does that make them better or worse than other clothes? Or is it simply one measure of success, one of many, to which untoward attention has been paid of late?

By Alexander Fury
Portfolio by Juergen Teller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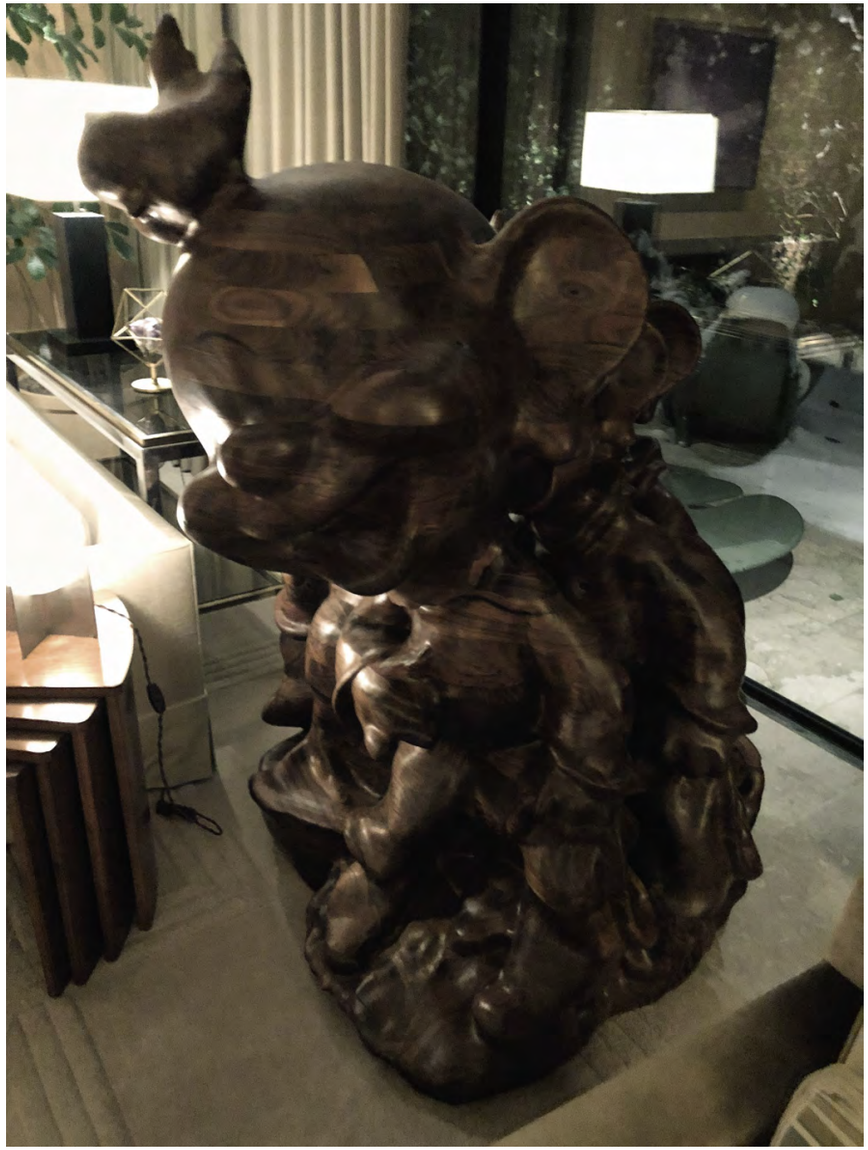

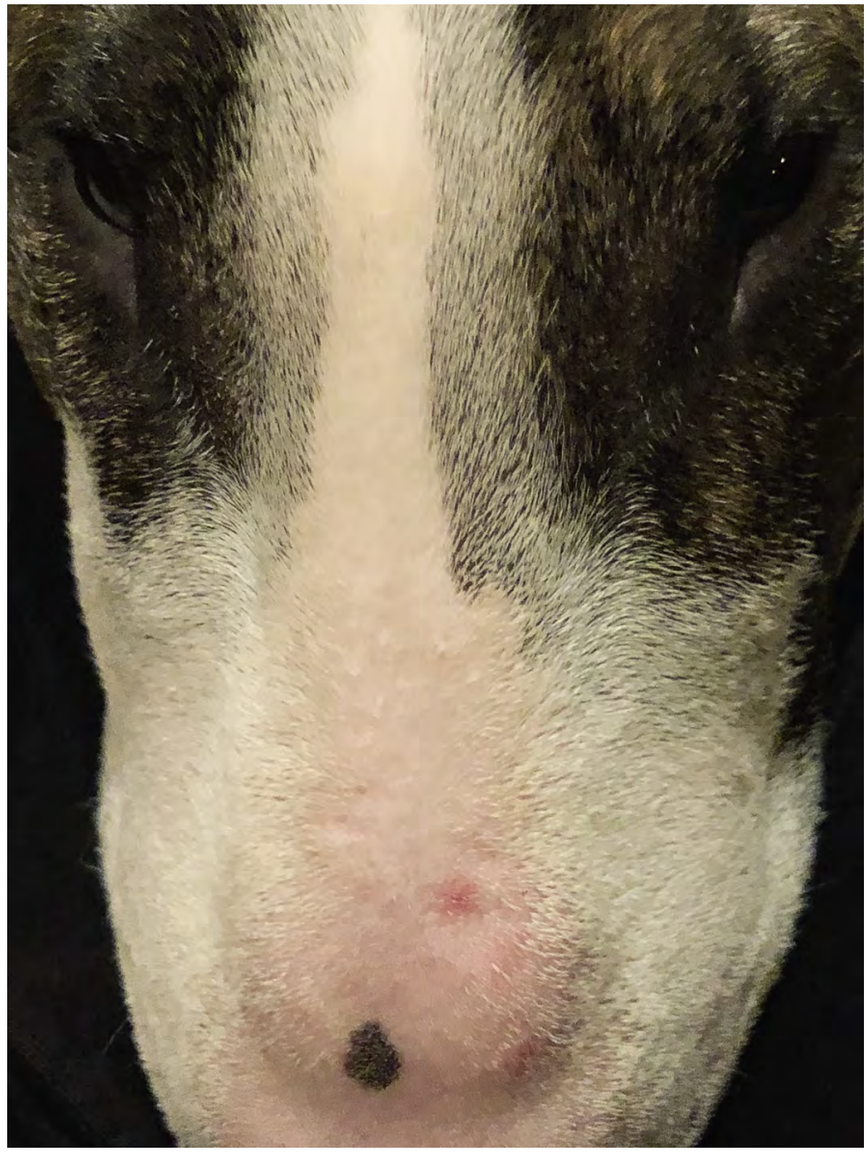

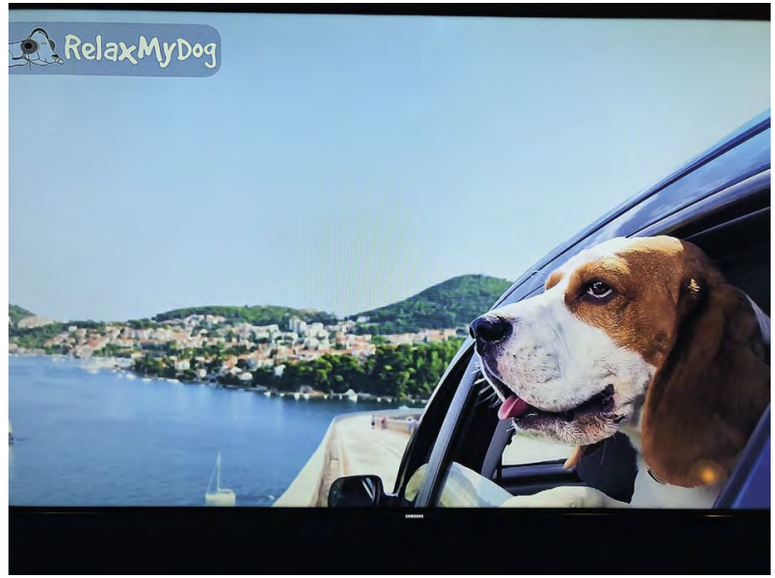
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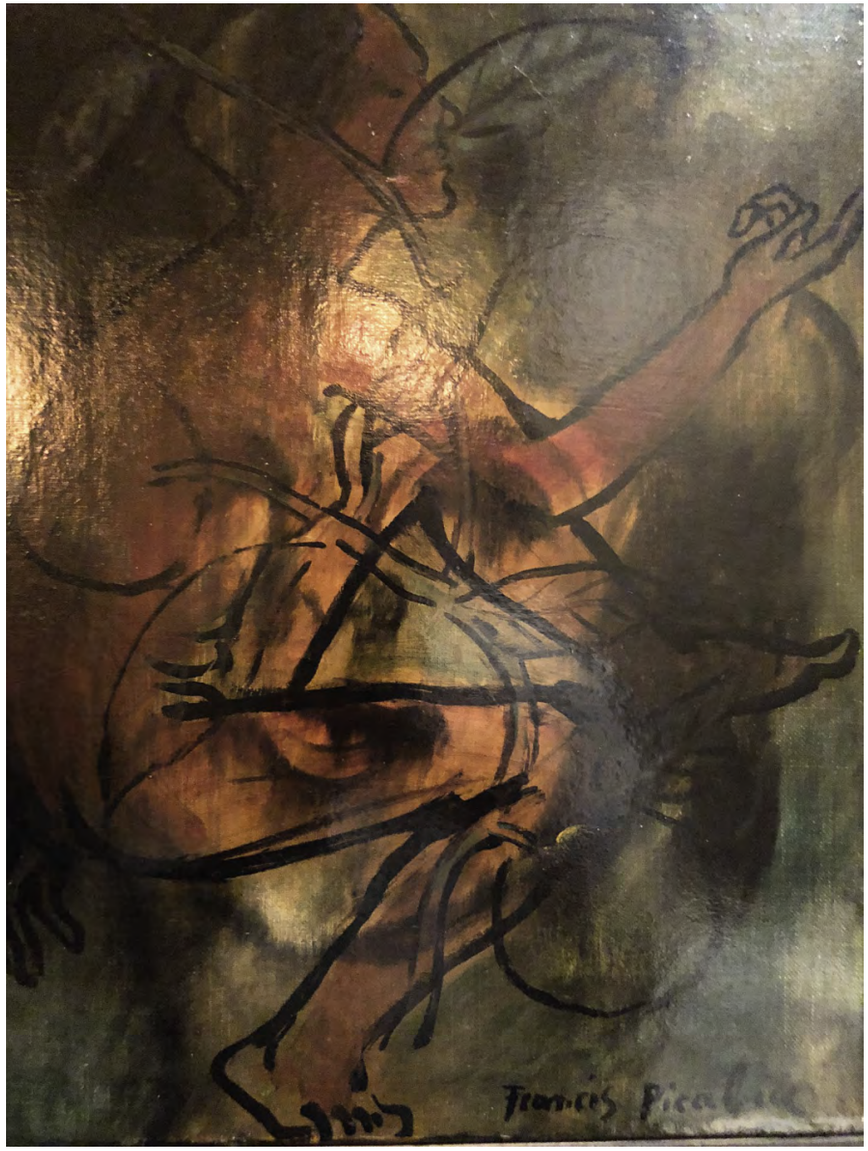
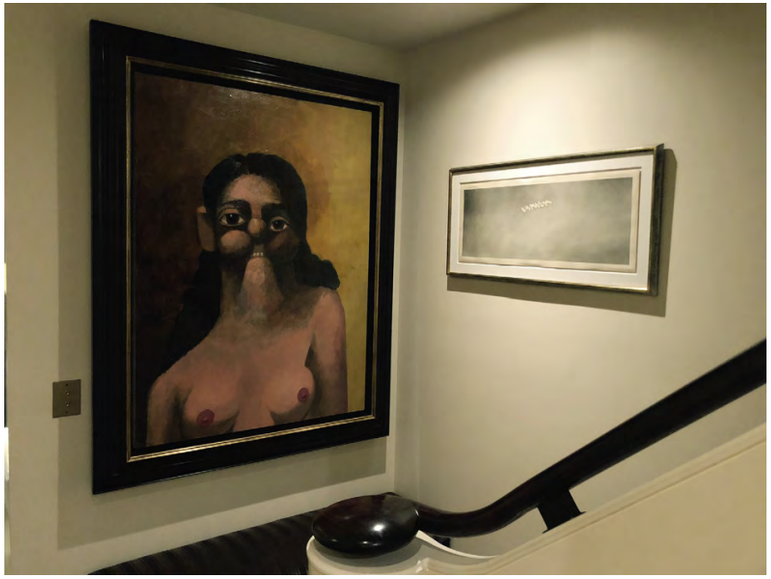
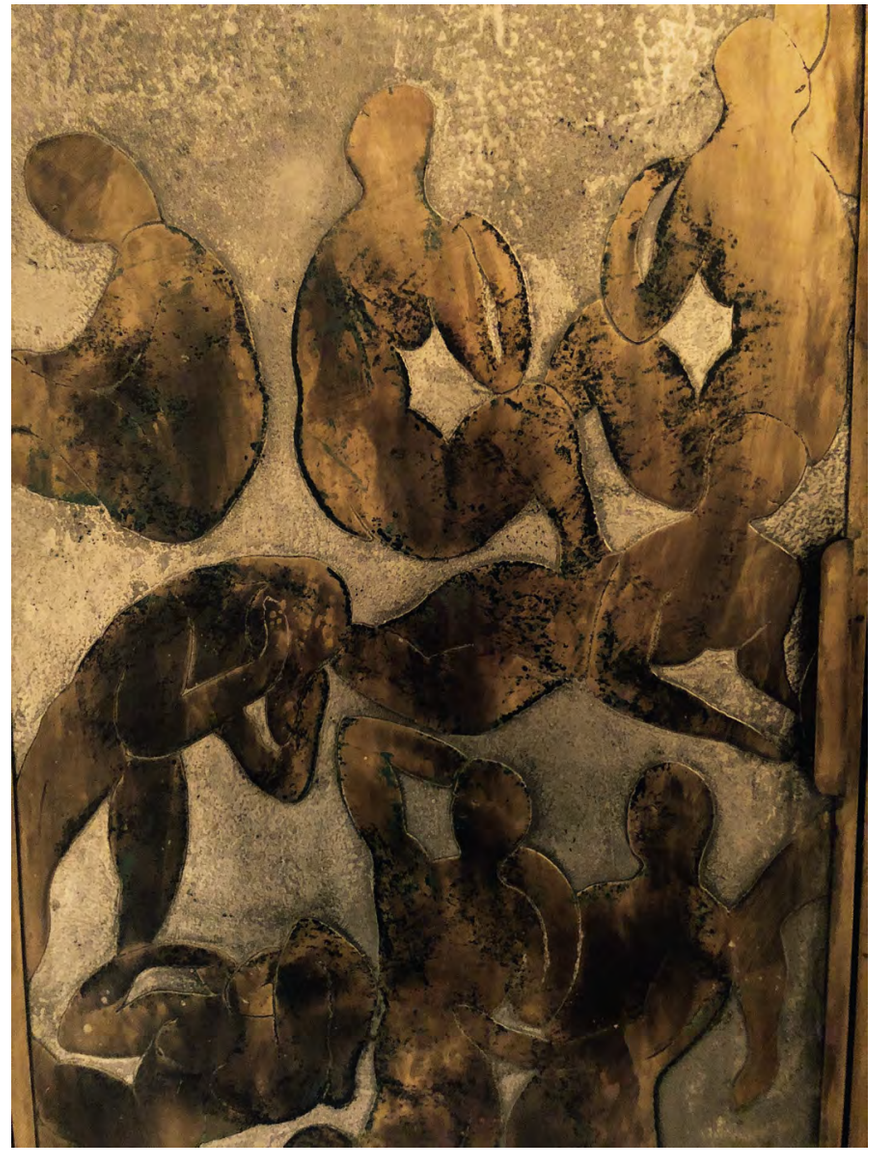
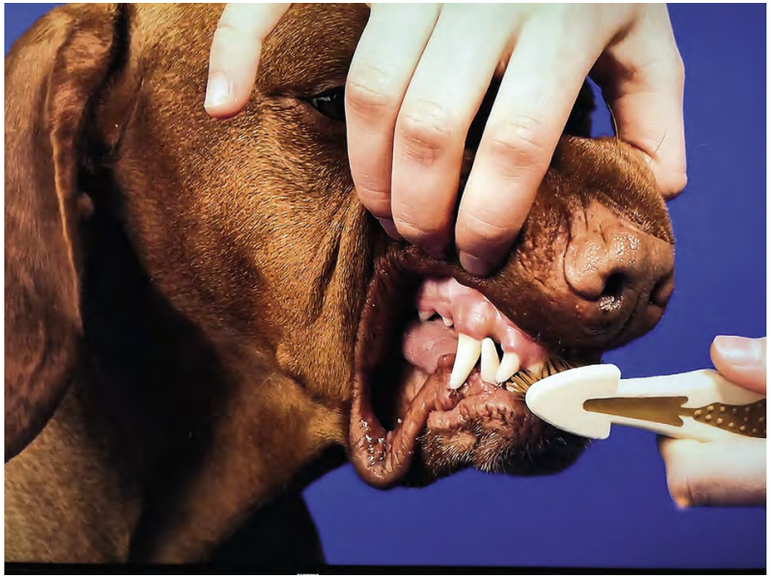

Francis Picabia

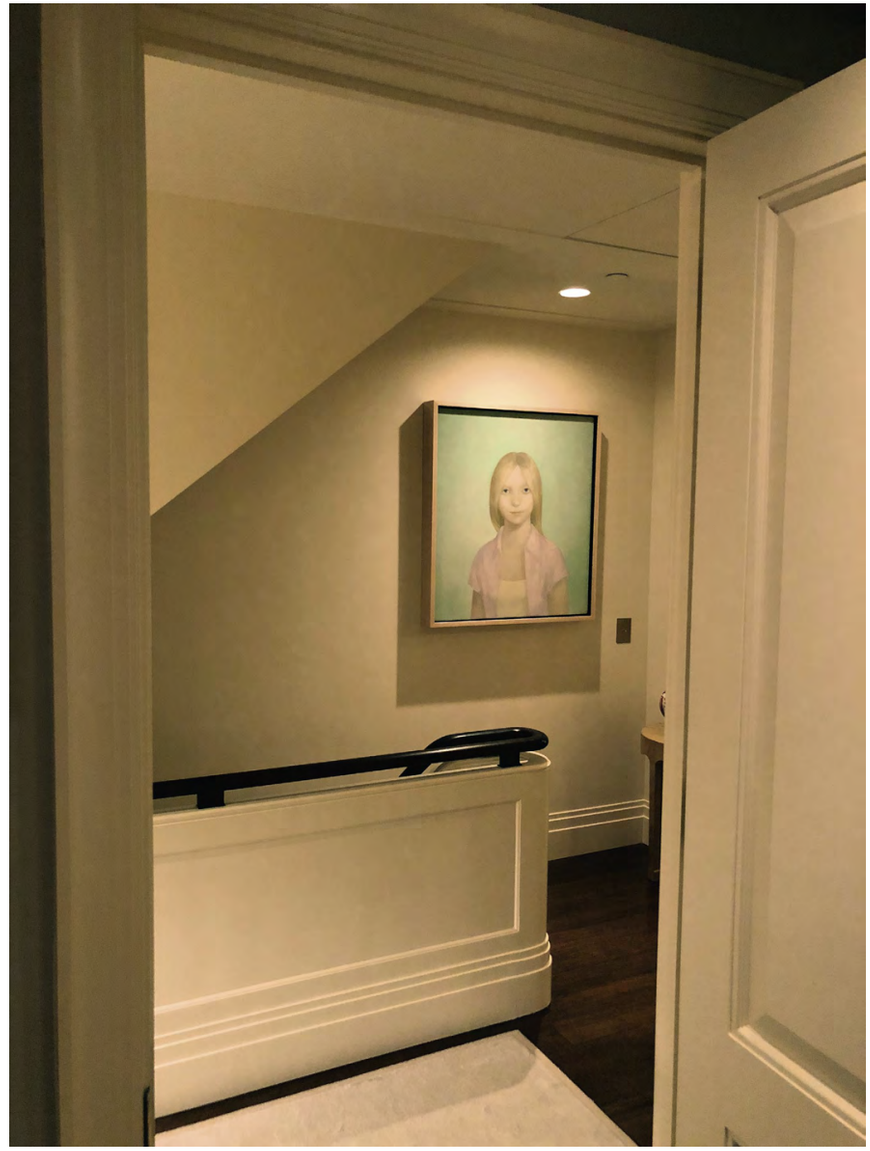
Francis Picabia







I WAITED ON THE CORNER
FOR MY BLIND DATE WHEN
WHEN THIS GIRL WALKED
BY I SAID, 'ARE YOU LINDA?'
SHE SAID, 'ARE YOU RICHAR
RICHARD?' I SAID, 'YEAH' S
SHE SAID, 'I'M NOT LINDA.'



I first met the designer Marc Jacobs in real life in summer 2018, at a dinner Miuccia Prada held to celebrate her first cruise fashion show in New York. Actually, that's a lie. I *really* first met Marc Jacobs thanks to Katie Grand, when I worked for her at *Love* magazine. In October 2012, I bumped into her as she was coming out of Hedi Slimane's debut womenswear show for Saint Laurent. She introduced me to a small, slender man dressed all in black. 'This is Alex, he works at the magazine,' she said. 'And this is Marc, he works at Louis Vuitton.' As then, he did.

Of course, I *felt* like I knew Marc Jacobs; everybody kind of does. He has transcended the narrow confines of the fashion industry – a task few have managed – to reach a level of universal fame, as designer avatar, archetype, and *Simpsons* character (in 2007, albeit for *Harper's Bazaar* rather than the TV show). You could argue that it was Louis Vuitton, where, from 1997 to 2013, Marc Jacobs was artistic director, that launched the designer into the mainstream. But, equally, it could be said that it was Jacobs – the first person to design clothes bearing a Louis Vuitton label – who transformed Vuitton from a successful, but staid luggage company into the world's most valuable luxury-goods brand, now worth, according to *Forbes* magazine, an estimated $33.6 billion. Both were already well-known – Vuitton for monogrammed trunks that cost more than a car, and Jacobs, primarily, for his 1990s retooling of cool-kid duds like ballet flats and elephant-corduroy hip-huggers into fashion statements – but both were magnified by their partnership. 'He's remaking the world in his image,' said the artist Elizabeth Peyton,[1] for whom Jacobs is a long-time friend and patron, in French filmmaker Loïc Prigent's 2007 documentary *Marc Jacobs & Louis Vuitton*, 'by sending off droves of girls down the street in sequinned ballet flats and purple corduroys.'

Jacobs' ascent to international fame seems to mirror the 'celebrification' of fashion itself. Once upon a time, he was primarily a designer's designer, a name known to insiders for whom he made clothes that were undoubtedly cool. That's a word some people hate, but which seems apt when discussing Marc Jacobs' rise in the 1990s, when there was something discernibly different, yet difficult to fathom about his clothes. They had some indescribable quality that somehow managed to transmogrify, say, a pair of potentially schlumpy cord trousers or a daggy, grandad cardigan into the most desirable thing imaginable. Maybe that was the quality that was cool. Whatever it was, it resulted in expensive clothes that often looked anything but – or remarkable clothes that didn't seem so remarkable to the world outside. Yet these kind of designs – that to outsiders seem like the emperor's new clothes, but in reality are of a substance that is conveyed through touching and wearing rather than imagery – are exactly the kind that sends the fashion world crazy.

Jacobs himself talks a little about cool. Not too much, obviously – talking about cool isn't cool. 'Like there are some times in the fitting rooms with our models where she's got a cool haircut, she looks really great, and she's standing there in this evening dress. And you're just like, "She just looks so cool,"' Jacobs told me this March, after his Autumn/Winter 2019 show. That show was a deflation of the arch, hyper, high-fashion clothes he had shown for the previous two seasons, kind of. It still contained ballgowns covered in thousands of hand-cut 'feathers' of silk organza, and vast coats whirled with fake leopard, but the models wore Stephen Jones beanie hats pulled low with brush-like plumes sticking up at weird angles, like unruly tufts of bed-head hair. 'They look really cool in real life,' is another phrase he sometimes throws out, almost sarcastically. 'You start to see some of those clothes in IRL – "in real life" – and they're not as arch.' He actually says 'IRL', before adding, as reading my thoughts: 'I say IRL with a certain amount of sarcasm and cynicism, because real life is so staged right now.'

'I wasn't interested in watching sports as a kid. Didn't want to be an astronaut. Didn't want to be the President of the United States.'

The theme of the 2019 Metropolitan Museum of Art Costume Institute Gala[2] is camp, and when we speak our conversation frequently veers into that territory. When Jacobs talks about 'real life', I'm reminded of Susan Sontag's observation that camp sees everything in quotation marks: 'To perceive Camp in objects and persons is to understand Being-as-Playing-a-Role. It is the farthest extension, in sensibility, of the metaphor of life as theatre.'[3] Yet when Jacobs talks real life, he doesn't mean staged 'real life'; he means actual, honest-to-goodness, real life. That's what he finds cool. Not his designs or the designs of others, unless it's as they are worn on the street by real people, rather than the catwalk. Yet, of course, when real life becomes fashion, it becomes 'real life'. Fashion can only play at being real and Marc Jacobs takes it to Liza Minnelli-style extremes with, for example, a $30,000 sequinned Prince-of-Wales-check trouser suit. His collections are now 'real life' in the same way they have been 'surreal' or 'fetish' or, indeed, 'camp', all themes with which he has played. He is and they are 'Being-as-Playing-a-Role', his role being that of 'fashion designer'. Heightened, of course, to the extreme.

On the record, we first met in Paris, in June 2018, four months after his Autumn/Winter 2018 show. We sat outside the Plaza Athénée, down the Avenue Montaigne from Dior, where back in 2011, Jacobs was rumoured to be in the running to succeed John Galliano, before the appointment of Raf Simons. That day he had been there for lunch with Kim Jones, the artistic director of Dior menswear, who worked with Jacobs at Louis Vuitton. We end up talking three times, once in Paris, once in New York, and once on the telephone. Karl Lagerfeld used to say that people who misdialled and accidently called the private number at his Chanel studio on Rue Cambon recognized his voice. I thought the same as I talked to Marc Jacobs: his voice is as recognizable as his appearance. It's dry, distinctly New York, or to borrow Jacobs' words: 'Obsessive, insecure, Jewish, New Yorker.'

Jacobs was born in the city in 1963, and brought up by his paternal grandmother in an Upper West Side apartment near the New York Historical Society and Central Park. He used to sneak out to Studio 54 as a teenager. He recalled his grandmother taking him shopping: 'She'd go to Bergdorf Goodman, Saks Fifth Avenue; she'd go to Bonwit Teller, Lord + Taylor. She was very of that generation – you bought different things and different pieces: "That's where I buy my stockings; that's where I buy my gloves; and that's where I buy my bags." I wasn't interested in watching sports. I didn't want to be an astronaut. Didn't want to be the President of the United States. I did want to go the beauty parlour with my grandmother, watch her have her hair done, and then go to Bergdorf afterwards to try the red cashmere double-faced coat or cape. I was like that. I could do it for hours and days, and never get bored.'

He liked his grandmother's style and style means a lot to Marc Jacobs. Talk to him about it and the name of Katie Grand comes up a lot. She has worked with him since 2005, styling the Louis Vuitton shows from then until 2013, and his own-label shows, and others, since 2012. Her impact runs much deeper, though: for a couple of weeks before each show, she hunkers down at Jacobs' headquarters on Spring Street for long days and short nights as the collection comes together. The process has been documented a few times: briefly in Loïc Prigent's film, and more recently in videos uploaded to Jacobs' own Instagram. The latter seemingly began as a way to explain why, after a decade of showing precisely on time, Jacobs' Spring/Summer 2019 show ran about 85 minutes late. It revealed some of the complex techniques used to construct the clothes, such as feathers creating fake fur effects in leopard prints, and silk petals smothering dresses. Jacobs' thought processes are linear; he is focused and precise, according to Grand. 'He formulates so much in his mind,' she told me. 'I'm really lucky in that he always has taste; he always has really good instincts. He's always right.'

What's your relationship to styling? Do you see being a stylist as part of your job? You've worked with Katie for a long time now and with Venetia Scott for a long time before that.
People always say, 'Oh, you're more of a stylist than a designer.' Whatever. I couldn't care less about labels. I'm not an inventor, that's for sure; I'm no Azzedine. I design clothes, and, yes, they have references to other clothes, and other things I've seen before, and I'm totally fine with that. But do I put them together in a way that I think requires style? Yes, I do. So whatever word or label you want to put on it, I like the process of putting it together. I like being involved in the design process and I like being involved in the styling process. Because, again, it's the image I'm interested in at the end, how the girls look. Whether they're going to a funeral or a punk concert, what attracts me is what they're wearing, what they look like. The identity that they create. That's what the draw for me in fashion is. It all begins there.

'People say, "Oh, you're more of a stylist than a designer." Whatever. I couldn't care less about labels. I'm not an inventor; I'm no Azzedine.'

What first excited you? Was it fashion imagery or the clothes and how people put together clothes?
Probably fashion imagery. Again, it wasn't necessarily the reality of what it looked like. Although, in some cases it was – especially with the punk scene.

Where the reality was the fantasy?
Exactly. They were going to a place where that fantasy was real.

The first time I spent any length of time with Jacobs was unofficially in New York, at that Prada dinner. Jacobs is a passionate admirer of Miuccia Prada; he wears her clothes most frequently, along with Rei Kawakubo's Comme des Garçons. The dinner was a 'dinner', a playing-at-being event. Guests, many not eating much, were clustered at smallish tables; Miuccia Prada was sat with Anna Wintour, and I was between Jacobs and Chloë Sevigny, an old friend of Jacobs', not of mine.

Do you remember, she said to Jacobs, when we first met? Jacobs, incidentally, had just been thinking about that: she was at Limelight, topless, in a Perry Ellis skirt[4]. I listened and thought, Could anything be more New York than that recollection? Later she recalled appearing in the video for Sonic Youth's 'Sugar Kane', alongside Jacobs. It was shot in the Perry Ellis showroom while he prepared models for the 'grunge' collection that he would show a few weeks after the video was shot in 1992 and which would get him fired before it was released in February 1993.[5] Jacobs, it transpired later, had been thinking about that collection because he was going to reissue it. It would be a 25th(-ish) anniversary hurrah, a quarter of a century since he got canned for exactly the same reason Yves Saint Laurent left Dior in 1960 – because he dared to bring a feel of what was going on the streets at that moment into the rarefied and fabulist environs of high fashion. Or to put it another way, because he showed real life or at least, 'real life'. 'I wanted them to look the way they do when they walk down the street, which is not dolled up,' Jacobs explained to the *New York Times* in February 1993. 'I didn't want them to look like drag queens, and I didn't want them to look like creatures …That's the way beautiful girls look today.' Yves Saint Laurent did it by showing a 'beat' collection, of clothes influenced by the black-clad existentialist beatniks of the Parisian Left Bank; Marc Jacobs' show was inspired by the Seattle-based 'grunge' music scene. The two collections bear comparison: neither was documenting an emerging scene – their scandal lay in their appropriation of counterculture, which was revolutionary in an haute-couture salon in 1960 and, oddly, seemed to cause as much of a fracas in 1992 New York. For his collection, Saint Laurent created a black leather jacket, a *blouson noir*, which is also a French colloquial term for yob,[6] the kind of hooligans Dior's couture clients feared and loathed. Saint Laurent's version was in crocodile, lined in mink, similar in their 'high-low' mix to Jacobs' silk 'grunge' dresses and cashmere thermal underwear – high-fashion reflections of realities. Back in 1960, the controversy led to Saint Laurent being conscripted into the French army: Dior's owner had deferred his call-up three times, but did not again, and he was quietly replaced with designer Marc Bohan.[7] Perry Ellis pulled the plug on the entire high-fashion line Jacobs had been designing, even as the rest of the industry was shifting in line with his vision; the next season, it was everywhere. Even Chanel showed a 'grunge'-inspired collection, with trailing shirts, laddered knits and heavy combat boots. Being fired was the impetus for Jacobs and his business partner Robert Duffy, who had supported him before and during his time at Perry Ellis, to prepare the launch of the designer's eponymous label. This new incarnation of Marc Jacobs showed its first collection the next year on Saturday April 9, 1994, the real-life Marc Jacobs' 31st birthday. That show was watched by the designer's contemporaries including Anna Sui and Gianni Versace, whose styles Jacobs' 'grunge' helped to put out of fashion almost instantaneously. But that now seems a lifetime ago, or rather, several.

'Me, and my obsessive, insecure, Jewish, New Yorker mind, I'm just like, "They hate me. They hate me. They hate me."'

Marc Jacobs has spent his life in fashion – and during that time, he's lived a multitude more. He began in the 1970s as a stock boy at Charivari[8], a now-shuttered relic, but in 1978, a pillar of the New York avant-garde; it later sold his first collection of hand-knitted sweaters bearing giant polka-dots and smiley faces. Jacobs studied at Parsons School of Design, graduating in 1984, and, with help from Duffy, established his own label in 1986, with backing from a variety of sources, including Onward Kashiyama, a Japanese retail conglomerate. His first collection featured trompe l'oeil hands clutching at waists, an idea Jacobs has returned to several times. In 1988, the 25-year-old Jacobs was picked by Perry Ellis to run its womenswear line, after the death of its eponymous founder two years earlier. The label was then a $100-million business, as opposed to Jacobs' own shoestring, increasingly embattled operation, which was being derailed both by shifting investors and unmitigated disasters, such as a fire that destroyed his Winter 1988 collection and fabrics two months before the show. When his hiring was announced, Ellin Saltzman, then corporate fashion director at Saks Fifth Avenue, enthused to the *New York Times* that it seemed 'as brilliant a move as Chanel hiring Karl Lagerfeld'.

For five years, it was, but then it wasn't. The 'grunge' scandal hit, Jacobs lost his job, and Perry Ellis folded its entire womenswear line. Suzy Menkes, then of the *International Herald Tribune*, distributed badges at the following Milan fashion week with the slogan 'Grunge is Ghastly'. In the *Washington Post*, in an article entitled 'Grunge. Wearing Out Its Welcome', Cathy Horyn panned the show: 'A red vinyl car coat seemed calculated to offend by appearing as clammy and crinkled as old diner leatherette. Who's kidding whom?' Yet in the long term, fashion changed. 'Twenty years after "grunge", Cathy wrote a huge, beautiful apology for everything she'd written,' Jacobs says. 'But it was interesting talking to Cathy about it. She said: "We as critics, we don't ever learn. We're always the first to shoot something down. Which is exactly what we're in this for."'[9]

I think all critics are like that – and it always feels two-faced.

'Suzy Menkes would say, "The show was great! Tell me all about it." And then trash it two days later. You never really know whether people like it or not.'

When you see a designer, you're pleasant, nice. Then you have to go home and write what you really feel. How to lose friends and alienate people!

Maybe it's cynical, but for many years, people would come backstage, and say they liked it and then two days later, you'd read the worst review of your life. That was the case with Suzy [Menkes] sometimes. She'd say, 'Oh, that was great. Tell me all about that.' And then it's like, just trashed. So you don't really know whether people like it or not. I'd always check with Grace Coddington, and there were a couple of people who I felt would tell me honestly whether they liked it or not. And there was always a bunch of people you'd see after the show who would be polite: 'Oh, thank you for having me.'

That's what I always do now. No opinion. I say, 'You must be exhausted.'

'You must be exhausted. Thank you so much for having me.'

Or 'congratulations!'

And me, and my obsessive, insecure, Jewish, New Yorker mind, I'm just like, 'They hate me. They hate me. They hate me.' Then, I'm always checking with Katie: 'Did you hear from anybody? Did anybody text you?' And she'll say, 'Well, people that matter said that they liked it.' And I know who matters to her. We all have our group of people; they know what they're looking at. Even if it's critical, even if it's something they didn't like, I feel, 'They know what they're looking at and I respect that. They've seen other shows, and they know fashion, so I'm good with that.' That doesn't hurt. But sometimes, you just feel like, 'I've had enough of everybody being hateful.'

It's also very difficult when you have worked on something so hard, for so long, had no sleep, and then to have someone say, 'I didn't like it.'

Again, there are people you hear that from, and it's OK. Sometimes, I don't even know myself when they are actually good or not, even after watching the video. It's funny. I think it probably started the last couple of years at Vuitton, where I would be so delirious and tired – the fatigue was so extreme – and I would just say to Katie: 'Was that OK?' And she'd say 'Yes, it was great.' I'd say, 'Really?' Then, I'd have to rest, and then watch the video, and then form my own opinion. I think it started back at Vuitton with that *Carousel* collection.[10] That was the first one where I was like: I really have absolutely no idea. Did that actually work? Did it look good? Did any of it come off the way we hoped?

Today, at the time of writing, Marc Jacobs is 55, about to turn 56. Three days before that birthday, he'll marry his fiancé, Char Defrancesco, in New York City; Jacobs proposed in April 2018 by organizing a flash mob in a branch of Chipotle. The world is almost as familiar with Defrancesco as it is with Jacobs; the designer is an avid user of Instagram, and his fiancé obviously features heavily.[11] Instagram is another means through which Jacobs showcases his role as 'fashion designer'; he has 1.1 million followers who look up to him, interact with him, see him on private jets, at private parties, in his art-filled home (Jacobs in front of a John Currin), and at art galleries (Jacobs in front of an Andy Warhol). They also know his dogs. In 2015, Jacobs posted an image of his naked lower-half (risqué but not explicit) to his account. It was intended as a private message to another user, and Jacobs later took

it down. 'I apologize to anyone it offended,' Jacobs wrote underneath. 'I'm a gay man. I flirt and chat with guys online sometimes. BIG DEAL!' Later that year, the *New York Post* wrote an item about Jacobs hosting a 10-person orgy. It's difficult to think of other designers whose personal lives engender such exhaustive public interest, except, perhaps, the late Karl Lagerfeld, who performed his roles of fashion designer and 'fashion designer' with equal, if not more, aplomb. They also both had ponytails for a period.

Marc Jacobs loved Karl Lagerfeld and attended his first ever Chanel show with the Winter 2018 ready-to-wear shows in Paris, accompanied by Defrancesco. He loved it, because Marc Jacobs loves fashion. Which was the idea behind us meeting. I love fashion, too, and I'm fascinated by Marc Jacobs, especially by his most recent three collections. They haven't turned fashion upside down or inside out; they weren't seismic, like 'grunge'. In a sense, if 'grunge' was 'real life', these collections have been 'fashion': playing-as-being high fashion that simultaneously actually is. To return to social media, after Jacobs' Autumn/Winter 2018 show, I tweeted a number of pictures with the caption: 'This is fashion history.' is going to go.' Cathy Horyn called the Autumn/Winter 2018 show a 'sumptuous funeral', Vanessa Friedman a 'requiem'. Bridget Foley hurrahed it across the cover of *WWD* as 'real fashion, powerful and undiluted'. Another attendee – a businessperson – sniped to me later during London Fashion Week: 'The atmosphere was leaden.' I asked where she had been seated, because in my section I had been reminded of Diana Vreeland's quote about a Balenciaga show: 'everyone was going up in foam and thunder.' Personally, I was sliding out of my chair on to the floor. 'You must love this,' another member of the British press screamed at me, across the catwalk. I did.

Which is why I wanted to talk to Jacobs. So there we were, outside the Plaza Athénée on the Avenue Montaigne, under a fine cooling mist, to which Jacobs was adding a cloud of vape smoke. He's given up smoking – the one vice that remained after two bouts in rehab – but now vapes incessantly. In New York, when I filmed with him, the vape smoke would rise like dry ice between takes, giving him the look of a 1930s matinee idol.

On that Parisian terrace, we started by talking about that

'When you're doubting yourself, just think, what would Yves [Saint Laurent] do? What colours would he do? What shape? How would he show it?'

Many replied, some agreeing, other incensed, asking if, how and why this could possibly be fashion history. What I actually meant was that the show itself was showing fashion history: Jacobs' wide-swinging references to the work of Lagerfeld and Saint Laurent, Claude Montana and Azzedine Alaïa, Perry Ellis, Carolina Herrera and Stephen Sprouse, as well as all of the above and more as seen and digested on the pages of *Vogue* in photographs, and possibly more interestingly, in the illustrations of Antonio Lopez and Tony Viramontes.[12] Jacobs' models looked like all those influences' work literally come to life, all striding along the spotlighted catwalk at the Park Avenue Armory. As such they were similar to quite a lot of things, but nevertheless quite unlike anything seen before.

That show polarised, almost as much as his 'grunge' show did. I asked Jacobs: would you prefer people to love it or hate it, rather than be, 'You know, it was *nice*.' 'Yes, absolutely,' he replied with a wry smile. 'Nobody strives for mediocrity, right?'

Before Jacobs' Spring/Summer 2017 show, I interviewed Katie Grand. 'It's like going into battle,' she told me, of the pre-show preparations. 'And you're not sure how that battle Winter 2018 show, because we hadn't, bar a few Instagram messages. I never did go back and see Jacobs during New York Fashion Week; if I had tried, he wouldn't have been there anyway. 'I run out. I don't like to do those things anymore,' he said, before vaping. 'Working as Katie and I do, it's two nights without any sleep, basically. Honestly, what happens is, I start hearing and seeing things – literally hallucinating, having audio and visual hallucinations. Then the show's over, there's an adrenaline rush and then this crash where I just sort of feel dizzy and I can't feel the floor below my feet.' Vape. 'I was like, "No wonder what I say makes no sense to anybody. It doesn't make sense to me." I just want to get the fuck out.' Vape.

I never used to go backstage, because I would always think, 'I don't want to be told what to think about this. I just want to form my own opinion.'
I'm not comparing fashion to art at all, but I know that when I go into an exhibition, I really prefer just to react to what I see. I either like it and can explain why, or I love it and I can't explain why, or I dislike it and know why. Whatever the reaction, though, if I really love something, then I am curious as

to what was going on and I want to explore it further. It's the same with Prada: I love seeing it, and I know I always have a connection to it. Then I'm interested to hear what Miuccia has to say.

There was so much in the Autumn/Winter 2018 collection. People said, 'It was so Yves Saint Laurent.'
But it wasn't!

And I said, 'But it was so Geoffrey Beene.'
And Claude Montana, Romeo Gigli, Stephen Sprouse, Tony Viramontes. There's always a bit of Saint Laurent in everything; there always will be. That used to be a thing that a friend and I would say, 'When you're doubting yourself, just think, what would Yves do? What colours would he do? What shape would he do? How would he show that?' That has always been an internal mantra for me. For that collection, Katie and I began by looking at old *Elle* magazines – that moment when *Elle* first started in America – and that quickly became nothing.[13] Then we were looking at images and came across one of David Bowie in a boater. And we were like, **it to another level again. It was just a love letter to fashion.**
It was funny, because some people afterwards were like, 'That was like the biggest fuck you.' And I was like, 'Fuck *you*!' I don't know why some people got it in their head that there was that kind of aggression in it. I don't do it to say 'Fuck you'; I'm not trying to piss anybody off.

In June 2018, the *New York Times* ran a story with the bold, confrontational and vaguely vulgar title: 'How Marc Jacobs Fell Out of Fashion.' It detailed the rocky road upon which Jacobs's business was and is travelling, including store closures. LVMH does not reveal the income of individual brands, but in a January 2017 earnings call, the group's CEO Bernard Arnault commented: 'I'm more concerned about Marc Jacobs than the US president.' The remark was widely reported. In one of our conversations, Jacobs talked a little about his Autumn/Winter 2018 advertising campaign, shot by Steven Meisel, of luxuriantly attired and coiffed models being dragged around by Dobermann pinschers, which had reminded me of Chris von Wangenheim's images of Christie Brinkley apparently being savaged by a dog wearing a dia-

'I know there's a responsibility to the business, and we all have to sell things, and all that kind of stuff, but the show, it's still so precious to me.'

'Oh, that kind of looked good.' We called Stephen [Jones],[14] and said, 'We kind of like the idea of a hat.' Then, I started to become a little bit more pensive with it and thought, 'We don't want this to be street-inspired.' Then during the process I began looking at runway shows, when runway models had their hands on their hips, when there was attitude.

Again, that's very that Yves Saint Laurent. Dalma[15] walking up and down until people applauded enough for her to exit.
Runway, runway, runway. I just kept saying it over and over, throughout the season; 'I think it should be a runway show.' It sounded as archaic as saying 'blouse' – and I thought that was its charm. Draped and wrapped in fabrics and attitude, the shoulder and the glove. The whole thing. It just sort of felt... right. Then we went and looked at some images from Karl's Chloé[16] that I had loved, and remembered. There were a million references in there – and it just felt nicer to look at all that stuff rather than a tracksuit.

I felt that with the Spring/Summer 2018 collection, as well. That show was super fashion, and this latest one was taking mond collar.[17] 'We got reactions from fashion people who loved it,' said Jacobs. 'I'm not sure a customer could….' He interrupted himself. 'I mean I don't know if we *have* a customer at this point.' He was joking, but still sounded pissed off. As you would if you've been second guessed and criticised, while putting out work that is arguably (but without many arguments) your finest to date.

'Maybe this is the part I'm holding onto, more than anything,' Jacobs says, hurriedly. 'If I think about why I do this – yes, I know there's a responsibility to the business, and we all have to sell things, and all that kind of stuff, but the show, it's still so precious to me. Whatever it is, whichever the collection, I just feel it should be untouched, nobody should interfere with its thing. What we decide that should be with any given season might change, but nobody should fuck with it. A show is just a precious thing, and it should always remain that way.' On the recording, Jacobs voice trembles a little. Maybe it's the sound; maybe it was the vape.

If Jacobs started off being fixated with the real, his ideas have gradually become more grandiose, expanding from the street until they have become their own world, running

parallel with our own. He designed that 'grunge' collection, but he has also erected a petrified, post-apocalyptic beach peopled with Victoriana-clad surfers; resurrected Diana Vreeland; and taken over the Ziegfeld Theatre in New York to present his own follies in a mostly red, white and blue collection that finished up on Bette Midler (and *that* wasn't even the 'camp' show). That's no small order, and Jacobs is one of the few designers left in the world with the raw talent to achieve it; you can probably count them on both hands (you'll maybe need a foot, too). Jacobs' fashion shows are extraordinary feats. The past half-dozen have been relatively stripped-back affairs (although Autumn/Winter 2019 was soundtracked, live, by the American Contemporary Music Ensemble, which isn't exactly minimal), yet the clothes – stronger than yesterday, more singular, maybe because fewer fucks are given – have perhaps had even more of an impact. They have carried the audience, as well as propping up the latter half of New York Fashion Week and opening each season.

Marc Jacobs is known for a seasonal shift, every collection an apparent volte face from its predecessor. That 'camp' season (Spring/Summer 2011, at Louis Vuitton, with a faux-marble runway and a pair of stuffed tigers) was followed by the 'fetish' season (Autumn/Winter 2011, with the Park Avenue Armory padded in whiplash plastic), a sugary-sweet turn for spring (Spring/Summer 2012), then turning into a winter season of enormous fur hats and a Vuitton show that was rumoured to have cost $8 million and featured a steam train pulling alongside a custom-built platform.[18] Each was done, he says, 'knowing full well that four months later, you'd be saying something else. But that's just it, we work towards saying something and projecting some sort of spirit, but then that's it, it's here and then gone.' Having said that, though, his Spring/Summer 2019 collection explored similar ideas and silhouettes to the previous Autumn/Winter: 'I was very happy with Fall and I still felt there was a validity to it, and I wanted to make it prettier. I increased the number of references, which I didn't do deliberately, it just happened, as images came into my head of a funny old Halston collection from 1981,[19] or whatever,' said Jacobs. 'What I was still holding on to for the Fall show from Spring was the idea of that moment when the silhouette was powerful. So even if it became prettier or more romantic, the ruffles still had horsehair in each of the hems, and were bound in satin. So they created a shape and a silhouette. The shoulder was still square and extended, and the sleeve still had the seam to create even more width. I would say we certainly kept some of that authority, and power.' Which is arguably trickier to pull off in a puffy pink dress than in a boulder-shouldered suit.

'This is a whole other conversation,' said Jacobs. 'Maybe I get too political or social but, you know, Lady Gaga wore that suit with the big shoulders and she said how it gave her a feeling of power, but I think a really powerful woman wears whatever she wants. It really doesn't come down to how long or short her hemline is, how wide or narrow her shoulders are, how pink or blue, how grey or black, how navy. The power comes from the person, not from the clothes. And again it seems like a much more contemporary conversation to say: "I feel good in this and I'm gonna wear it, and I don't really care what you think of me – and you still have no right to touch me, no right to call me names. No matter what I wear or what I look like, I do this for me." That's the interesting thing to me.'

Part of the Spring/Summer 2019 collection was inspired by the work of Genieve Figgis, a faux-naïf Irish artist who paints quasi-historical scenes with thickly clotted paint. Her work inspired big fat ruffled, pastel taffeta dresses with crinolined hems. Jacobs, of course, has a famously enviable art collection, which has sometimes inspired shows. 'There was a "Rachel" season that was all inspired by John's painting of *Rachel in Fur*,' says Jacobs. 'And that was the collection where I was really inspired by what Rachel looked like. And how she dressed.' 'Rachel' is artist Rachel Feinstein; 'John' is her husband, artist John Currin, who painted her wearing a fur coat in 2002. Jacobs based his Autumn/Winter 2004 collection on the painting, and Feinstein recreated it for that season's advertising campaign, shot by Juergen Teller. All very meta.

Marc Jacobs is inspired by all sort of things, art, and books, and films. 'I'm not abstract,' he says bluntly. 'I'm inspired by the work of other designers. There have been other references in the past, but they were usually very fashion oriented. I think there was a season ages and ages ago – 23 or something years ago – where I had just seen the Cockettes documentary,[20] and so all the girls had feather boas and little sequin dresses from the 1920s, the 1940s. You know, it was all a magpie kind of aesthetic. There have definitely been films that have inspired the beginning of the conversation, or a book, like *Gatsby*… So there are definitely non-fashion starting points, but that's usually because it's the fashion in them that first seduced me.' He's talking now about his Autumn/Winter 2019 show, which, at first glance, was a return to reality from the fantasia of the prior Spring and Winter. 'It's just a big T-shirt and a knitted beanie,' said Katie Grand about my favourite look of the show, a humbug-striped wool jersey dress, turtle-necked but tugged down to the floor (with a bustle) and a feathered Stephen Jones wool hat.

What was the thought process for that Autumn/Winter show? Was it different to the last two? Because I felt the previous one was so connected, but this was you going off on a different tangent.

I think there were two things going on. I felt a connection between the last two shows. What I did feel was very different was the attitude and look of the girls. I still wanted to make some of the clothes that we've been making the past two seasons; I just didn't want to show them the way we've shown them the past couple of seasons. That decision was taken early on, even when just talking about the shoes, which was before even the clothes. We were like, 'Oh, brown shoes.' It was that random, and that dictated what came after. The shoes weren't all brown, but we wanted something casual with a girl just wearing it as opposed to her being completely done up. The second step was talking to Stephen Jones, which always happens prior to ever making a piece of clothing. I was saying to Stephen for months that the only thing I knew was that whatever we were going to do it would be based on the knit cap or the beanie. So the brown shoe and the knit cap were the top and the bottom of the look. There was going to be a casual realness somewhere in my line with girls we liked for who they were, rather than who we could transform them into.

All this talk with Marc Jacobs makes me wonder: what is the measure of a great fashion designer? There is so much focus on the size of Jacobs' business, but hardly anyone is asking how important that actually is. So here's the question you're never supposed to ask: does it actually matter if the clothes sell? Does that make them better or worse than other clothes? Or is it simply one measure of success, one of many, to which untoward attention has been paid of late? Of course, there's a Marc Jacobs customer, but in all honesty, probably not as many as there are for other labels that are producing simpler clothes that are easier to buy and, yes, worse than Jacobs'. Less significant. Less interesting. Less brave.

'I feel we're missing a little bit of "fashion",' Jacobs says. 'I know we can kind of "casualize" – or whatever the word would be – anything. It's one of my favourite things to do, throw a Prada coat over a pair of jogging pants and sneakers, but it's that other thing that seems to get lost now, that feeling of "Oh my god, it's a show".' He pauses. 'But then I wonder if you aren't shooting yourself in the foot by doing that, because it intimidates certain people.' He remains philosophical, though. 'I remember going to see an exhibition once with my friend Kim, Kim Gordon from Sonic Youth. We didn't like what we were seeing and she said, "It's really important to see bad art sometimes." She wasn't being pretentious, but she was like, "It's good; both are good."' You understand what she meant.

'What propels all of us in my studio, and me specifically, is a love for fashion,' Jacobs says. 'I'm very honest and unapologetic about that. I've been inspired by fashion all my life.' His voice is a little distant, but he is on the phone from New York, not in real life. 'And that's why I do this. It's what I love.' It's why he's a fashion designer. No speech marks.

'It seems so much more contemporary to say: "I feel good in this and I'm gonna wear it. I don't really care what you think of me. I do this for me."'

1. Elizabeth Peyton, a figurative painter who like Jacobs came to prominence in the 1990s, is best known for androgynous portraits of her friends (including Jacobs) and historical figures.

2. In 2009, Marc Jacobs was the honorary chair of the Costume Institute Gala (also known as the Met Gala), organized annually to raise money for the Met's Costume Institute.

3. Susan Sontag's essay 'Notes on "Camp"' was first published in the autumn 1964 issue of *Partisan Review*; the 6,000-word piece launched her career.

4. In the early 1990s, Limelight, owned by nightlife impresario Peter Gatien (who also owned Palladium, Tunnel and Club USA), was the centre of rave culture in New York City. It was based in a deconsecrated Episcopalian church at 656 Avenue of the Americas; the 19th-century building now houses Limelight Fitness, which boasts of offering a 'unique gym experience'. Fashion designer Perry Ellis built a fashion empire that, according to the *New York Times*, 'glorified the clean-cut, all-American look'. He died of an AIDS-related illness in 1986, aged 46.

5. Sonic Youth's 'Sugar Kane', from the album *Dirty* (1992), was released as a single in 1993; the accompanying video was Sevigny's first screen appearance. In a November 1994 *New Yorker* portrait of Sevigny, author Jay McInerney writes that the video was a parody: 'The idea for the video was to do a little parable about the way Seventh Avenue plagiarizes the guerrilla fashion of the street: the Trickle-Up Theory of Fashion, where the Up Haute cops the Down Low. The whole grunge thing was just peaking: runway models were slouching around in expensive *hommages* to the scruffy rockers of Seattle and their thrift-shop flannel shirts. And who better than Chloë to represent the supercool street girl whose style gets ripped off in the designer showroom?'

6. The Larousse dictionary defines a *blouson noir* as 'a young person engaging in violence and depredations as part of a gang'. Media scaremongering about the dangers posed by the *blousons noirs* began in 1959 after two leather-jacket-wearing gangs fought each other with bicycle chains, knuckle dusters and, according to *Le Monde*, lamb bones, in Square Saint-Lambert in southern Paris.

7. Dior's owner, textile magnate Marcel Boussac, had managed to use his political influence to have Saint Laurent's conscription deferred. After the 'beatnik' collection, he withdrew this support and the designer was called up into the French Army to fight in Algeria, the country of his birth. Saint Laurent never saw action. After 19 days, he had a breakdown and was committed to the Val-de-Grâce military mental hospital where, according to Brenda Polan and Roger Tedre's book *The Great Fashion Designers*, he was given a 'primitive regime of dangerously addictive heavy-duty sedatives' that 'wrecked his health and launched him on a lifetime of drug and alcohol abuse'.

8. Charivari was a mini-fashion empire launched by the Weiser family and considered New York's most cutting-edge fashion destination for much of the 1970s and 1980s. It introduced many European and Japanese designers to the US, including Yohji Yamamoto and Martin Margiela. Charivari opened its first store in April 1967, later expanding to six stores across Manhattan; the company filed for bankruptcy in 1998.

9. Cathy Horyn published her mea culpa on website The Cut on April 1, 2015. In it, she wrote: 'When I look back on that night, I am struck by an altogether different thought: Why were those of us in attendance such a miserable chorus of condemners?'

10. The Spring/Summer 2012 Louis Vuitton show – towards the end of Jacobs' time at the house – featured an all-white fairground carousel hidden from guests by curtains until the start of the show.

11. Jacobs' Instagram feed features many photographs of his fiancé (now husband), Char Defrancesco, a Swiss model and candle entrepreneur, many taken on the couple's holidays in Saint Barth's and on the private jets they take to get there.

12. Antonio Lopez was a celebrated Puerto Rican illustrator and photographer. In 1969, he moved to Paris where he discovered Jessica Lange, inspired Karl Lagerfeld and created illustrations for many of fashion's major publications. Tony Viramontes was an American fashion illustrator and artist who died aged 31 in 1988 and best known for his covers of Janet Jackson's *Control* and the Duran Duran side project Arcadia's album *So Red the Rose*.

13. *Elle* began publishing in the US in 1985.

14. Stephen Jones is a milliner who has collaborated with Vivienne Westwood, Claude Montana, Dior and Thom Browne, among others. He first met Marc Jacobs in 1983 at an event organized by Fashion Foundation in Japan.

15. Brazilian model Dalma Callado walked in numerous shows by Yves Saint Laurent and many other designers during the 1980s. In 1987, she was given an award by the Council of Fashion Designers of America for 'personifying the spirit of fashion for 1986'.

16. Karl Lagerfeld was at Chloé from 1966 to 1988.

17. Chris von Wangenheim was a German fashion photographer celebrated – alongside Helmut Newton and Guy Bourdin – for his provocative and highly sexualized vision. His shoot featuring Christie Brinkley's arm and leg in the mouth of a Dobermann was published in the February 1977 issue of American *Vogue*. Wangenheim died in a car crash in 1981, aged 39.

18. The train for the Autumn/Winter 2012 Louis Vuitton runway show was a real steam engine pulling a carriage called the Louis Vuitton Express. American actress Sarah Jessica Parker called the show 'one of the great triumphs of all time'.

19. Roy Halston Frowick (1932-1990) was an American fashion designer whose Halston label was among the most celebrated of the 1970s. The designer became well known not only for his clothes, but also for the Halstonettes, an ever-evolving group of top models – including Pat Cleveland, Anjelica Huston and Karen Bjornsen – who would accompany him at public appearances, all dressed alike, to act as live advertising for his creations.

20. David Weissman and Bill Weber's 2002 documentary *The Cockettes* chronicles the story of the eponymous late-1960s group of hippies – both men and women – who created and performed drag-filled midnight musical extravaganzas with titles such as *Tinsel Tarts in a Hot Coma* and *Journey to the Center of Uranus*. Extremely popular for several years, the company split in autumn 1972, but their wild, tinsel-covered exuberance is said to have inspired glam-rock pioneers including Elton John.

Post-production: Catalin Plesa @ Quickfix Retouch.

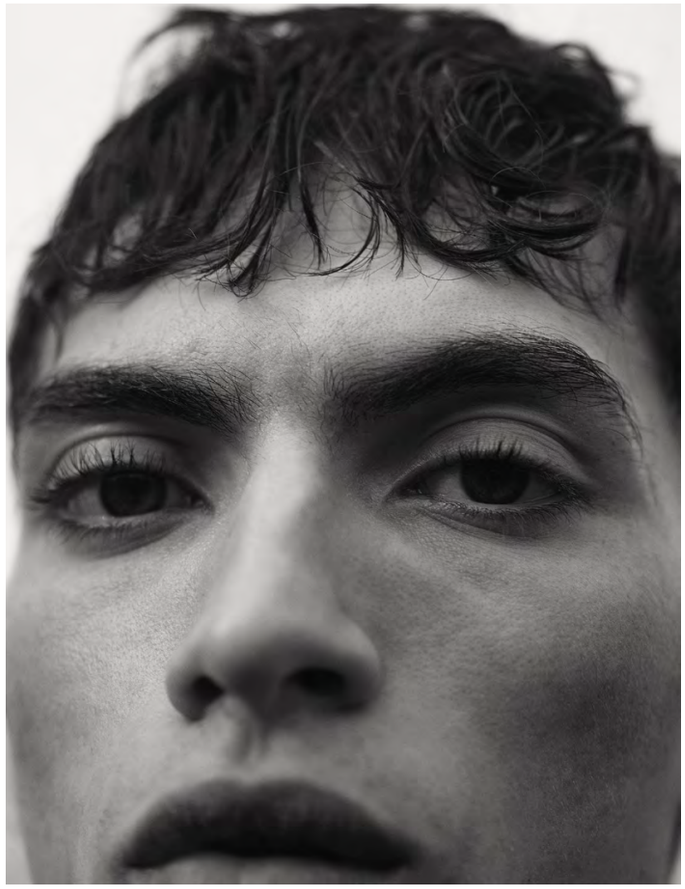
‘Nothing is left to chance.’

The story – and back story – of an encounter between tailored clothing, long-lost elegance, and young French men of North African descent.

Photographs by Karim Sadli
Styling by Joe McKenna
Words by Farid Chenoune

Previous page: The only remaining photo that exists of Karim Sadli's grandfather, Saïd Sadli.
Opposite page: Medhi wears black double compact dry wool coat and trousers by Bottega Veneta, white cotton shirt by Dries van Noten.

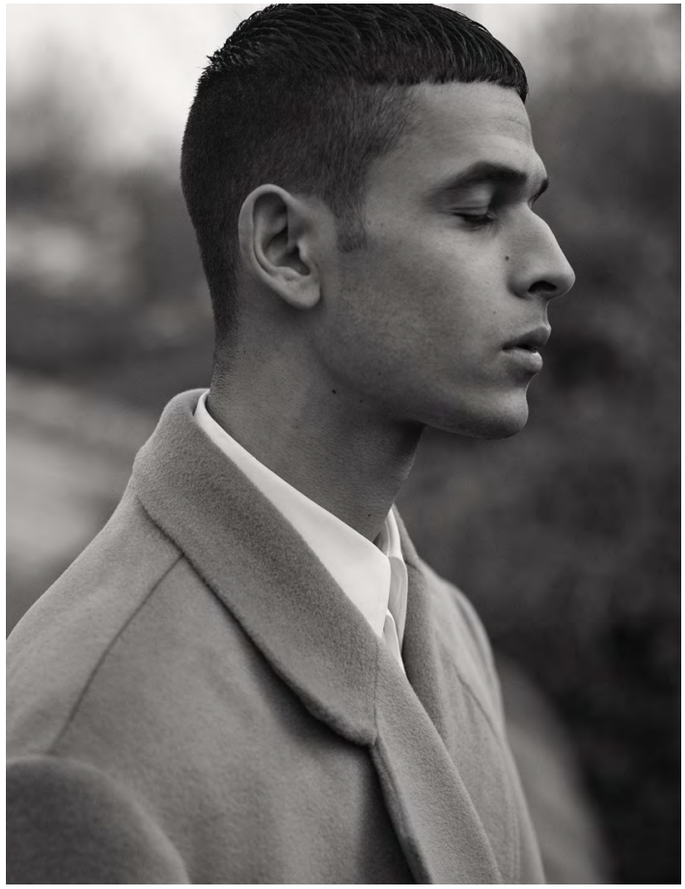
Opposite page: Malek wears black wool double-breasted suit and black leather lace-up shoes by Prada, black leather belt by Maison Margiela.



Opposite page: Keenan wears navy double-breasted wool coat with XL black felt sleeves and black slim-cut cropped trousers by Maison Margiela.

Opposite page: Kahlil wears grey wool double-breasted suit and black leather lace-up shoes by Prada, black leather belt by Maison Margiela.

Keenan wears black double compact wool jacket and trousers by Bottega Veneta,
black leather lace-up shoes by Prada.



Opposite page: Keenan wears black double compact wool jacket by Bottega Veneta,
and Ali wears gold necklace from Pebble London.
This page: Ali wears camel-wool wrap coat by Balenciaga and white cotton shirt by Dior Men.

This page: Alexandre and Ali both wear black nylon jackets by Valentino,
Ali wears white cotton ribbed tank by Hanes, necklace from Pebble London.
Opposite page: Ali wears camel-wool wrap coat by Balenciaga and white cotton shirt by Dior Men,
black double compact wool trousers by Bottega Veneta, and black leather lace-up shoes by Prada.

Opposite page: Alexandre wears black wool trousers and black leather lace-up shoes by Prada, grey herringbone boy coat with XL black felt sleeves in wool and black leather belt by Maison Margiela.

Models: Khalil, Mehdi, Alexandre J., Keenan, Malek, and Ali. Hair: Damien Boissinot @ Art + Commerce. Make-up artist: Christelle Cocquet @ Calliste Agency. Manicure: Julie Villanovas @ Artist. Tailor: Sebastian Pleus @ Atelier On Set. Set designer: Alexander Bock @ Streeters. Photography assistants: Antoni Ciufo, Thomas Vincent, Chiara Vittorini. Digital operator: Édouard Malfettes @ Imag'in. Styling assistants: Gerry O'Kane, Ricky van Gils, Edward Bowleg. Hair assistant: Kyoko Kishita. Casting director: Martin Franck. Production: Brachfeld Paris.

Certain fashion shoots come loaded with an unexpected and sometimes clandestine back story, a sort of prehistory. Karim Sadli's photographs, presented over the preceding pages, for example, discreetly tell the story of an encounter, between intricately tailored clothing and young French men of North African descent from the Parisian region. Crudely put, teenagers brought up on streetwear. But that back story itself is based upon another story, one that came to Sadli when he watched a documentary about the demonstration of around 30,000 Algerians in central Paris in 1961. It took place at the height of the anti-colonial war in their homeland and by the time the march was over, somewhere between 30 and 100 Algerians – to this day no one knows exactly how many – had been killed by the French authorities, and many of their bodies dumped into the Seine. 'My grandfather was there,' says Sadli. In photographs of the events, many of those Algerians, who often lived in shanty towns just outside Paris, are seen dressed up in their Sunday best, however worn and tattered it might have been. These smart clothes and suits become visual markers of a dignity that they had always been denied by the French state. 'I found their story so touching,' says Sadli. 'That's where the idea for the shoot came from.'

Sadli sees his project as almost utopian, a 'fantasy'. The teenagers of 2019 he cast considered it outlandish. The Algerian War? Barely heard of it. Suits, jackets, neatly pressed trousers, and tailored coats? From another world, light years from their hoodies. Nevertheless, the process became a revelation and, to put it grandly, a moment of historical transmission and initiation. For transmission, these young French men 'from an immigrant background', as the French expression '*issus de l'immigration*' describes them, took the past they knew little about extremely seriously. 'They were amazed to discover that French colonialization in Algeria lasted 130 years,' says Sadli. 'I don't know if they took this story to heart, but sharing it with them helped them make sense of what I was asking – to be photographed in a suit – something that had initially appeared completely incomprehensible to them.' The initiation took place through *wearing* the clothes.

Alongside Sadli, the other guide was Joe McKenna, the series' stylist. The clothes he'd selected were structured, and cut in dense, mainly rigid fabrics. 'Everything is highly restrained,' says Sadli. 'Joe is extremely meticulous in his way of putting the clothing in place, in arranging a pleat. Nothing is left to chance.' The shoot was perhaps the first time that the young men, more accustomed to the loose nonchalance of sweatshirts and sweatpants, have felt so 'relied upon' by their clothes, which, in this instance, required them to move, to hold themselves, and to stand in entirely new ways. 'Some arrived for the shoot literally trembling with nerves,' says Sadli. 'But as things progressed, I saw them transformed and really getting into it, as if they were gradually understanding what Joe and I were looking for. I felt it all clicked into place when they started gently teasing one another, cracking each other up: "*Ouais! La classe!*" By the end, they'd completely made the clothes their own, and clearly enjoyed the experience.'

As I listened to Karim Sadli, and looked at his photographs, and then wrote this short text, I thought about my father, Algerian, like Karim's grandfather. He too was looking for dignity and respect, and throughout his life he expressed that desire through sartorial elegance. He was proud of it and, without really understanding it at the time, I was proud of his pride. He had four or five *complets*, as suits were referred to in French back then, and they were his working capital. He would renew them at his tailor, Jacques Deligny at 38 Rue du Mont-Thabor in Paris, whenever he could afford to. I have kept some of his *complets* from the 1960s and 1970s, including one that is cut straight and has a single button. A spring suit, in light pigeon grey, shiny and slightly electric, it continues to emit the same lustre, the same aura it did when my father wore it. I remember the care he took getting dressed each morning, carefully constructing an appearance to show the world. The ceremony would culminate in the final adjustments, when he would check that everything was in place. The shape of the shoulders and the position of the shirt and jacket collars were particularly decisive. So when Karim described Joe McKenna's gestures to me, I saw my father: meticulous, as precise as an acupuncturist. Whether the young models themselves felt the shadow of this long-lost elegance pass over them will probably never be known, but ultimately, it's these unspoken layers of back story that make the series all the more intriguing.

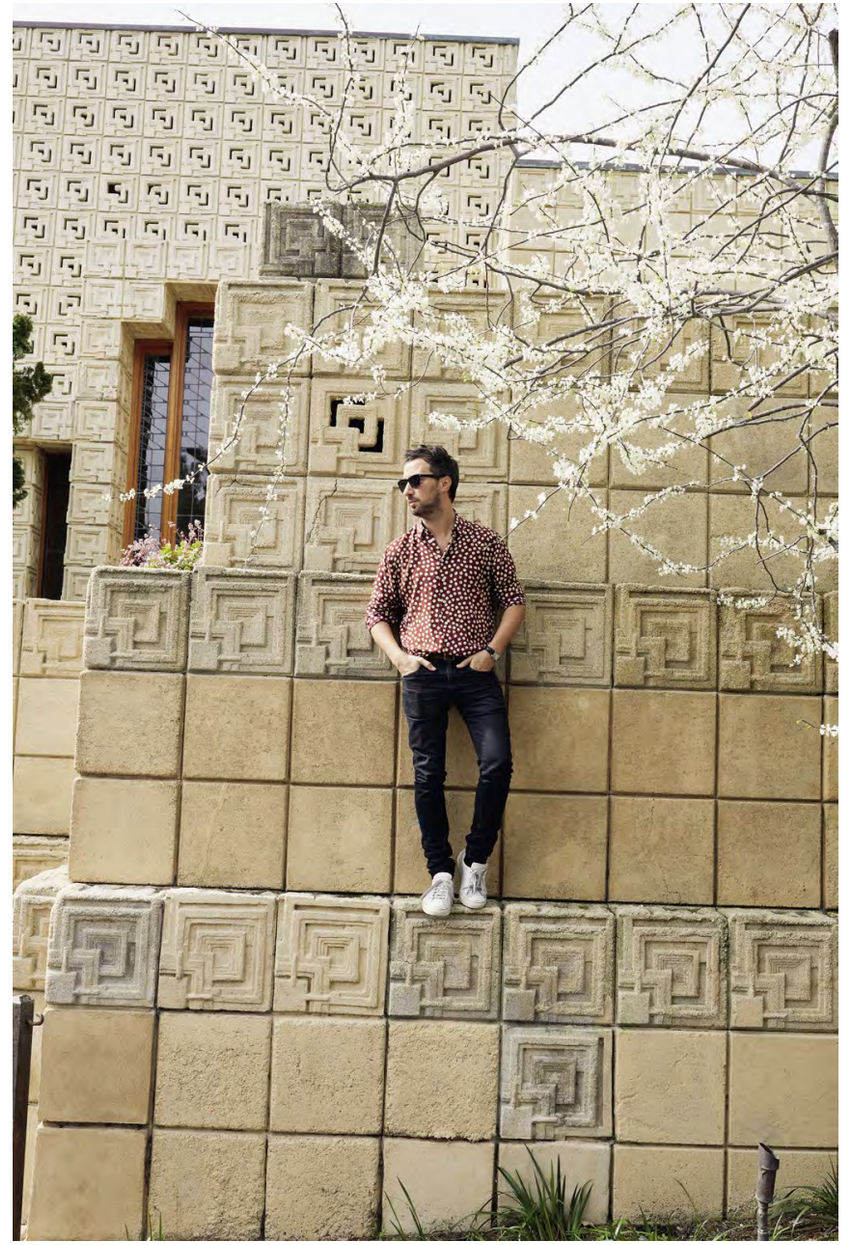
Hocine Chenoune, 1937.

‘Most brands are too scared to shock.’

Anthony Vaccarello takes the sacred house of Saint Laurent ‘Rive Droite’.

By Carine Bizet
Portrait by Juergen Teller

Photography assistant: Karin Xiao. Post-production: Catalin Plesa @ Quickfix Retouch.



In a white T-shirt and black jeans and a calm voice, a relaxed, yet controlled Anthony Vaccarello welcomes me into the Saint Laurent studio, inviting me to sit down upon one of the big black sofas. The studio, located in the former Hôtel de Sénecterre, a large *hôtel particulier* on Rue de l'Université, has pale parquet that is bathed in the morning light and decorative white moulding that emphasizes the height of the ceilings. It is a space as opulent as its occupant is unassuming.

In 2016, Anthony Vaccarello was handed the keys to the kingdom of Saint Laurent, the legendary house that today remains as ubiquitous as it is divisive. When he arrived, the fashion birds of ill omen predicted the fall of the YSL empire after the departure of the turbulent deity that is Hedi Slimane. But they were wrong. Anthony Vaccarello has determinedly made his mark on the house, bringing a smouldering sensuality to the 21st-century Saint Laurent woman, one who, beneath the lights of the Eiffel Tower, struts in stiletto heels with disarming authority. Too bad for the censorial or the nostalgic, business is brisk and constantly increasing: sales in 2018 were €1.74bn, up 16.1% on 2017. Now, three years into the job, Vaccarello has given himself a new project: in mid-May, at 213 Rue Saint-Honoré, the former home of concept-store pioneer Colette, he will unveil a new Saint Laurent space. Neither a classic boutique nor a new Colette, the space will be home to a series of collaborations between Saint Laurent and brands from other domains. Because Anthony Vaccarello has both a taste for teamwork and a sense of independence, a spirit of contradiction very much part of Saint Laurent's genetic heritage. In April this year, *System* sat down with Anthony Vaccarello who, for a designer of few words, proved that he definitely has something to say.

Why did you call the store Saint Laurent Rive Droite?
The Left Bank – *la rive gauche* – is the original birthplace of the house. With this new store, we've crossed the Seine to the Right Bank, and we're establishing another chapter of Saint Laurent history. It's also a nod to Saint Laurent Rive Gauche, the line that led to the democratization of the house's style in the late 1960s. With Rive Droite, we're saying we want to address a wider audience; there will be things at all prices.

What kinds of things?
It's going to be very varied: furniture reissued in collaboration with the Comité Jean-Michel Frank, toy cars by Candy Lab, rare books and magazines, lighters, pens and vintage 1970s record players. Outside, in front of the store, there will be a truck selling food by New York restaurant Sant Ambroeus. Inside, the space is modular, so we can organize events and exhibitions.

When you mention lighters and pens, I think of those 1970s and 80s YSL licences…
These days, that sounds almost exotic or charming, but at the time thoses licences totally diluted the identity of brands such as Saint Laurent. When I arrived, we bought up all the licences, and the idea behind Rive Droite is actually the opposite of a licensing deal: everything is decided internally, and built upon the Saint Laurent identity.

Are there any limits for this project?
No limits, no censorship – within the law, of course! We're also going to open a Rive Droite store in Los Angeles in what has been the menswear store on Rodeo Drive, and because marijuana is legal there, there will be gold rolling papers, which we won't be selling in Paris. We also have condoms. To start with I wanted to design really outlandish ones, like leopard or zebra print, but then someone sent me an image of a 1980s Saint Laurent advert for St Valentine's Day, in which Yves Saint Laurent was photographed slipping condoms into people's letter boxes. I thought it was amazing, so together with Juergen Teller, we redid some photos using the same principle, with a nude man and a fully dressed woman. There'll be a new *cuvée* of Saint Laurent condoms at the Rive Droite boutique.

Was this playful approach to the store concept important to you?
I tend to get bored very quickly; I need the excitement of new things. It's not that I think I've explored all options on how to make a jacket, or how to make a dress, but nearly, and for Rive Droite, I wanted something that was more fun, more personal. I think it's important to put playfulness back into fashion. Everything is so formatted and compartmentalized. Even when people say they're going to try something new, they always go back to the same old structures. I'm not saying that everything we do is amazing, but we're definitely looking to have fun.

'The Rive Droite store is a nod to Saint Laurent Rive Gauche, the line that led to the democratization of the house's style in the late 1960s.'

Have these collaborations allowed you to move towards new ideas?
I love the technical side and talking to manufacturers, people who have different points of view, other ways of doing things, another sense of design. Modifying the shape, texture or colour of something that doesn't enter the production chains of the brands we collaborate with takes longer, so you have to find out how to do it. Putting real gold leaf on a skateboard, for example, requires a lot of technical research. In the process, there's a lot of editing and elimination; some things are useless and others we'll end up using later. But every stage is interesting. I'm not directly inspired by all this in my work, and I'm not going to start designing furniture, but this change of perspective is a real breath of fresh air.

How were the collaborations chosen?
It's quite a personal selection, a little bit 'selfish'. They're often objects I have collected or things that I love. For example, when I redecorated my house I was looking everywhere for a particular Jean-Michel Frank lamp, but it was totally impossible to find. I've always admired his work; it evokes a sort of minimalist Paris for me. It's pure design in noble materials. Until recently, only Hermès had permission to reissue Jean-Michel Frank furniture, but the Comité accepted our request. I chose pieces from the back catalogue that had neverbeen reissued. I love this idea of reissuing pieces that have been slightly forgotten. For the Willy Rizzo reissues, we avoided the famous tables, because we were more interested in the lacquered trays that are just as representative of his style, just less well-known.

Would you say that collaboration is the height of fashion right now?
Yes, but at the same time, the principle of a creative collective has always existed. I'll admit that I don't really like the trendy and systematic aspect of collaborations, but I don't see Rive Droite as this sort of exercise. It's more like a way of extending the brand universe and its DNA. It's also a new platform of exchange between Saint Laurent and the public that revolves around all sorts of objects that might catch your attention: a pen, a boom box, a toy car reissued in marble and XXL format. In addition, there's no seasonality. Of course, we've planned to keep the store stocked for at least a year, but after that, new things will be launched as and when they're ready. It's an organic process that will permanently evolve. For example, quite by chance, I came across a photograph of Jean-Michel Basquiat and Andy Warhol wearing Everlast boxing gloves and shorts, and I thought why not collaborate with the brand and make a boxing outfit? And we've done just that.

The fashion industry spends a lot of time questioning the best way to sell luxury. Is Rive Droite a way to take a stand on this issue?
Today, with the Internet, we have to ask what makes people want to open the door of a physical store rather than just click and buy at home. What is the added value? And then, to be honest, deep down no one really needs an umpteenth shirt or a new coat. Today, people are buying lifestyles that go with the brand and so it's really important to offer something else on top of just 'product'. Rive Droite is part of that idea: it's a place for life, for expression. It also shows how Saint Laurent is more than just a luxury brand; it's an attitude.

Why do this now?
It seemed like the right time. Three years in, I feel really good at the house.

It's a house with a particularly imposing legacy: Monsieur Saint Laurent and that specific idea of the French woman. Does that, or did it, weigh on you? You seem relaxed in the face of it all.

'It's a new platform of exchange between Saint Laurent and the public, expressed through different objects: pens, condoms, lighters, toy cars...'

I've never thought about it to be honest. When I first arrived at Saint Laurent, I said to myself, OK, you've been taken on to do this job, do what you know how to do. And nothing was imposed on me, even though I didn't have experience of working in a major house. I've never had to do so many pictures and products. There are so many burned-out designers, so I didn't want to put myself under that sort of pressure, the 'I must make this much money' scenario. I genuinely have fun; I do want I like. Francesca Bellettini, our CEO, has given me carte blanche in spite of the risks – and I am truly grateful for that.

Would you say you have anything in common with Saint Laurent himself?
The house has fashion's most beautiful DNA – it's so modern, with this mix of

sophistication and a hint of scandal. I really want to respect and honour that. I always have images of Saint Laurent in mind, but it's subconscious, not at all intellectualized. I don't really see things in common, but sometimes when magazines make comparisons between certain designs by Monsieur Saint Laurent and my own, including those from my own brand, I think, 'Actually they're right.' That said, Saint Laurent has influenced so many designers, and he's still so present in the public's collective consciousness.

Yves Saint Laurent built a close circle of collaborators inside his house. Do you have your own circle today?
I've always been convinced that it's complicated to do things on your own. I like the exchange, the discussion around design. I've always worked like that. To evolve you have to be open, but that doesn't mean spreading yourself too thin. I believe in the idea of diversifying around a shared image. There has to be a powerful vision, a driving idea that can be expressed in different ways. That's very much what I do with the campaign photos. Last season, for example, I started working with Juergen Teller because I wanted there to be a rawer edge to the campaigns, less sleek. I met him while working on a project for *Man About Town* magazine, which also involved Béatrice Dalle. It all went so well that I called him afterwards. Among today's photographers, I think Juergen's the most authentic. He gives an image of women that's neither unrealistic nor aggressive, yet remains strong. For me, he's the new Helmut Newton, but without mimicking Newton's style. His photographs of women can seem quite raw, but that's only because we've become so conditioned to looking at ultra-Photoshopped images of women. Juergen's pictures are his way of seeing beauty, and it's full of benevolence. At the same time, we shot the denim campaign with Gray Sorrenti, Mario's daughter. She's 17 years old and so confident. She knows exactly what she's doing and what she wants; she was so at ease with the models who were all her age. She has a fresh and modern viewpoint that I really like and I'm planning on working with her again on other projects. Ultimately, there's no strict plan or rules; I can collaborate with several people on different approaches, then sometimes we take a break, and then meet up again.

Your job also allows you to meet people you admire and with whom you have since worked?
Absolutely. I have always adored Béatrice Dalle. She was unforgettable in *Betty Blue*, and in Claire Denis' *Trouble Every Day*. Behind her flamboyant personality I discovered a really sensitive and shy person. She's going to be in a short film – actually, not that short, it lasts 40 minutes – that we're doing with Gaspar Noé, a director I really like. He brings something very free to film-making. It should be ready for the Cannes Film Festival this year and features Béatrice, Charlotte Gainsbourg, Mica Argañaraz, Abbey Lee Kershaw, a mix of really strong actresses and models. I don't know how it's going to turn out, but I gave them carte blanche. We discussed the concept thoroughly, but I chose Gaspar with the intention of him expressing himself freely. The film's not about fashion, it's not going to be 'Saint Laurent the house'; everyone is dressed in Saint Laurent and they are Saint Laurent women, but it's not a campaign. I can't wait to see it; I know that Gaspar's happy with the results. I stopped by one night on the set and there was fire, witches, screaming… I can't tell you anymore. In any case, I was pleasantly surprised by his working method. He makes spontaneous cinema and you might get the impression he improvises with a hand-held camera, but not at all. He pays such close attention to every detail, colour and shape; nothing is left to chance. It's fascinating to watch.

There are a lot of women with big personalities in your inner circle, like director Nathalie Canguilhem, Charlotte Gainsbourg, model Anja Rubik and Béatrice Dalle. Is that deliberate?
It's come out of chance encounters and close connections. It's all happened organically. There are just some people you have more to say to than others. I met Anja in 2011, working on my own brand, and she was on my wish list of models that I wanted for the show. She came along and I quickly realized she wasn't 'just a model', a girl passing through; she was interested in the clothes, the creative process and the brand. I found her inspiring and we've frequently worked together since. I try to avoid anything systematic, but when she wears a Saint Laurent look and starts to walk… She is incredible and there's no reason to stop working with her just for the sake of saying we're using different models. Along with Freja [Beha Erichsen] for me, Anja's the woman who best embodies the house of Saint Laurent. The brunette and the blonde, they're both totally unaffected, both super feminine, but they never simper. And outside of the show context, it's as if they're almost not interested in fashion at all; it's completely secondary in their everyday lives. We can talk about other things and I really like that.

On the subject of women, throughout this conversation you have described a Saint Laurent woman who is a rarity in fashion today: a sexualized woman…
Yes, and I really want it to stay that way. I think it's crazy that there is no sex in fashion anymore. We're always talking about 'strong women', and the 'power of women', yet at the same time people seem to think sex is synonymous with submission. I don't see it like that at all. Firstly, a woman *can* find pleasure in a sort of submission, but above all, I don't believe in this systematic opposition: submission-domination, powerful woman-bimbo, man versus woman. It's so reductive. Life isn't that simple or as unequivocal as that.

Does your Saint Laurent woman have a particularly French side?
Sexuality, or the representation of it, is very different in one place to another. Women, and men, too, going topless or wearing an open shirt isn't necessarily a call for sex. Maybe in France girls can have a more masculine attitude and wear an open shirt with trousers without that being an invitation to someone to grope them. Maybe we don't seduce in the same way in Europe as in the USA or the Middle East. When a woman at Saint Laurent wears a tuxedo open over bare skin, there's never the idea of seduction, but rather the idea of affirmation of self and self-confidence. Maybe also a sort of defiance, but certainly not a call for sex…

Can France keep its celebrated *exception culturelle*, its cultural distinction?
Yes, but it wouldn't take much to flip over into a state of mind that I find backward. On a global scale, we have the impression that most brands are too scared to shock. They don't want to make waves on any market; they have generally chosen to eradicate the sexual nature of women. In France, I'm very lucky to be supported by the press. Journalists still have this culture of the liberated woman, but latent puritanism is gaining ground. We hear a lot of talk about the return of the *bourgeoise*, but who really wants that? It's a bit like brandishing Donald Trump's slogan, 'Make America Great Again'. It's a sign of going backwards. Clothes, as a political tool, shouldn't be carrying this kind of message. Ultimately, there is nothing more rigid than the *bourgeoise*. She's been idealized, and we often see her as a bit naughty, but that couldn't be further from the truth. She's much more likely to demonstrate in the streets against gay marriage; she is definitely not someone 'cool'.

We actually get the impression that the female body has all but disappeared in this debate…
The female body is completely denied, or rather it has been transformed: you can't show a single pore now. In campaigns from the 1980s, the girls were human; they could have shiny skin. Photographs looked like stolen moments. Today, images are frozen by Photoshop. Women look like robots. I'm fighting against this on a daily basis. When I'm brought a photo to sign off, I always ask to see the unretouched image so I can make sure as few changes as possible have been made. I want skin; I want life. I don't want to make big statements or brandish placards. My way of fighting is through my work and my collections. When I watch the other shows, it's true that at Saint Laurent we come across differently, and all the better for it.

And yet there has never been so much talk of feminism and women's rights…
Yes, rather strangely, movements like #metoo have also created a kind of caricatural sense of militancy. On one hand, we seem to have these intellectual, untouchable, powerful women labelled 'feminists', and on the other, these supposed victim bimbos with hyper-sexualized doll physiques like Kim Kardashian. I don't see why you can't be a feminist and wear a short skirt. And why can't a Nobel Prize-winning woman be sexy? What's wrong with that? I just don't think it's the right battle to be fighting and it's not particularly feminist.

So, what is feminism for you?
It's about common sense: we should all respect women for who and what they are, stop overprotecting them, show tolerance and openness. That's all.

'We hear about the return of the *bourgeoise*, but who really wants that? It's like Trump's "Make America Great Again". It's going backwards.'

'I don't see why you can't be a feminist and wear a short skirt. And why can't a Nobel Prize-winning woman be sexy? What's wrong with that?'

‘I’ve always been afraid of real life.’

Christian Lacroix’s designs looked like the fashion you would imagine if you had only ever imagined it.

By Tim Blanks
Portraits by Dominique Issermann

Genius is no guarantee in fashion. You can change the world, but that world eventually, inevitably demands payback. The fashion industry is, after all, a commercial enterprise. So while Christian Lacroix helped define the 1990s, fashion's golden decade, his business never turned a profit. It's a demoralising thought that the inspirational ebullience of his work should now be so overshadowed by financial failure. Perhaps it's simply too soon for posterity to give him his due, to gild him with the reputation his genius demands – but it's not too soon for me. I was a country boy, and season after season, Lacroix's shows were my hot-pink-drenched passport to a higher plane. The gourmet spread he laid on backstage was only the start. Lift-off took place with the visual and aural froth of the set and the soundtrack. Then we soared into the stratosphere on clouds of colour, wings of sumptuous fabric, flying carpets of rococo pattern. Christian Lacroix's designs looked like the fashion you would imagine if you had only ever imagined it. Pure fantasy. And then he'd bring everything back to earth with libertine severity, a jolt of tailored black, a hint of inquisition. He teased. He'd be all tweedy, Ralph Lauren-y backstage, and you wondered where the fantasia came from. I had some idea, but then I spent several hours talking with Lacroix at the Hotel Amour in Montmartre earlier this year and realized that, even after all this time, I'd actually had none.

The Arlesian childhood

Christian Lacroix: As a child, I was a bit fragile and very often ill, and I was always fascinated by the past. I can remember when I realized what the passing of time meant: one day I was at my grandmother's and she bought me a Mickey Mouse magazine from the newsagent next door. I was in love with Mickey. My dream every morning when I woke up was to see if Mickey was in my bed. I wanted him to be alive; I loved him so much. I imagined Mickey and I attending a film opening and there were real people mixed with the cartoons. I was excited by seeing the date on the cover of that magazine – 1947, five years before I was born. I understood then that life, the world and Mickey had all existed before me, and in that moment, the past became my thing. I learned that early in the antique world of my grandparents' house. It had a real attic, with clothes and books. I found bound volumes from the Second Empire,[1] fashion books from 1860, a century earlier. The same year, I saw the trailer of Visconti's *The Leopard*[2] at the cinema and it had the same sort of clothes as I'd seen in the books. I thought the past was so amazing, but there weren't many books on the actual history of fashion. For Christmas one year, I asked for a Swedish book about the history of fashion and then, in the 1960s, the curator of the Musée Carnavalet did a big book,[3] and I spent all my pocket money buying it.

I was always boring my grandparents. Tell me about the family; tell me about the war; tell me when you lost your mansions. On my father's side, they imported farm equipment. They were quite nouveau riche, but they were elegant; they had taste. They lived in the mountains in the south, in the Cévennes. It was a wonderful house. When it was snowing, they had to leave with the children at five in the morning to get to school for eight. My great-aunt Madeleine was the first to go south to Arles. She was the only one who got her *baccalauréat*.[4] She was brilliant and wonderful, and my first muse. I could cry when I speak of her. During the war, she was in the Resistance. They had all these Jewish workers with fake names in their factory, and she was arrested by the Gestapo. But it was made up of young guys from Arles and she recognized them. She walked up to one guy – 17 or 18, in a big coat, who had a gun pointing at her – and slapped him in the face, saying, 'Does your mother know you're here?'

'My mother said she hated my father, because he was too elegant for wartime. She called him Rita, because he was a redhead like Rita Hayworth.'

I never heard this story from Madeleine, only from the family. I know that she also helped a doctor and a very famous surgeon escape from the Germans in Arles by dressing them as women in her clothes. But she would never tell me anything herself. She would just laugh when I asked. Until she died, I was in love with her. She was so elegant, always dressed in Maggy Rouff,[5] an old French couture name, with patent leather high heels, even at the end. Every morning and every night, I have a little tear for her. One of my biggest regrets is I could never tell her I was gay. I introduced all my gay friends and she accepted them because they were my friends, but she would have been different if she had known I was, too. But from the skies, she agrees.

I know that Madeleine had some kind of connection with the people at the Élysées Palace.[6] Her sister, my grandmother, was invited to the Élysées Palace ball during the Universal Exhibition of 1937 in Paris.[7] She actually appeared on television during the Exhibition and she remembered the make-up and how hot it was. She was very coquettish. This was my father's side of the family. They were opposed to him marrying my mother; they had prepared a bourgeois marriage with a doctor's daughter. When the Germans invaded Arles, they took over the girls' school, so my father and mother ended up in the same class. She always said she hated him, because he was too elegant for wartime. She called him Rita, because he was a redhead like Rita Hayworth.

My mother's family had arrived in Arles in the 17th century. They were originally lacemakers. My mother's father worked on the railway and he was a total dandy. He had no money, but he wanted all his clothes lined with green silk and his bike painted gold. I don't know why. I think my first guy attraction was to him. Even in his 60s, he had beautiful muscles. And he was very tough. When I was a child, he would take me into the gypsy area of Arles and tell the kids to beat me up. He wanted me to resist, to make me tough.

He didn't take you to brothels to educate you, did he?

No, not me, but he was visiting them a lot himself; he had a lot of mistresses. Both of my grandfathers were unfaithful to their wives and had mistresses. When my father's mother died, my grandfather married his mistress who was far older, with too much lipstick and blonde hair. Quite vulgar.

Your father's aunt Madeleine was involved with the Resistance, but what did your mother's family do during the war?

My mother's father was in charge of the trains, and he didn't do any Resistance work. He never collaborated, though. He was an opera lover, and he was fascinated by the singing of the German women soldiers. He would follow them and sing with them. He was crazy. Arles was very badly bombed during the war because it was a very important railway junction, but he was too proud to go to the shelter during the bombing. He'd go and hide where the sewer entered the Rhône river and watch the spectacle. The fish were dying because of the bombs and at the end of the alert, he'd collect all the fish. One day when he got home, everything had been destroyed, but he'd organised a dinner for 12 people, so he told my grandmother to make a fire with the furniture so he could cook the fish and still have his dinner party.

My grandfather was wonderful. He had his beloved bird, a little bird with red and yellow feathers, and it would go down through his shirt and come out through his fly. And every two weeks, he would go to the attic and create a performance out of the news. He would mix terrible things with happy things, making it funny, like a one-man show or stand-up comedy. And he would do this just for my parents and me. My mother was an only child, my father was an only child, and, at the time, I was an only child. He would do this one Sunday, and then the next Sunday, I would imitate him for my father's side of the family, acting, singing. I was only six or seven, but it was a big influence on me. It showed me that life is interesting when it is like theatre, and fashion is interesting when it was like theatre, but with a *populaire* side, too. Anything bigger than life. Perhaps I was afraid of reality, and doing anything over the top struck me as a way of protecting myself from it. I think my grandfather was doing the same, laughing with catastrophe. In the end, he went mad because he drank too much. I remember my mother and I taking him to the doctors and he said he'd gone crazy because his mistress – who was a hatmaker – had left him. He was diagnosed with *délire de la persecution*,[8] and committed to a beautiful 18th-century clinic near Avignon. It was still furnished with 19th-century wallpaper, everything was like a townhouse, and every week, he sent me postcards, photographs of the furniture, and would ask me to please sketch them for the next week. My grandfather loved my way of sketching – he understood. At the end, he was in the hospital in Arles, in the very room where Van Gogh[9] was kept. I visited him every day because I was the only one in the family he would recognize. He was 77, but he still had those beautiful muscles, and he would smile every morning when I came to shave him. At the end, he was leading my hands. He had wonderful, thick-veined hands, with a ring that a Serbian officer had given him in the First World War. It was always very difficult to leave him. I was 18 then.

'When I was a child, my grandfather would take me into the gypsy area of Arles and tell the kids to beat me up. He wanted me to resist, to make me tough.'

The arrival in Paris

It had been my life's dream to come to Paris since the beginning of the 1960s. I used to tell my parents: I can't do anything without being in Paris. I was 19 when I arrived in October 1973. But I was so disappointed living here – the smell, the people, everything. The only thing I loved was the sky, because we don't have the same sky in the south, or the same sunrise or sunset. I went home for the weekend, and when I came back to Paris, I was crying under the shower. If I hadn't met Françoise [Rosenthiel], I think I would have run away.

It was a Sunday. I called a boyfriend of mine and I told him I was so sad, could I come round for a cup of tea? He had a wonderful studio on the Rue d'Assas, very elegant, in the sixth *arrondissement*. After 10 minutes, this girl arrived with a great shirt and ethnic skirt, her mother's old fur coat from the 1930s, white stockings, and navy and black platform shoes from Durer, a very famous shoemaker at the time.[10] And she had a Vidal Sassoon haircut.[11] She'd go to London to have her hair done. She was 'wow!', with this smoky voice. I fell in love at once.

So it's 1973 and she sounds a bit glam rock. Were you?

Oh no, I was a country man. I wore slim jeans, high boots, up to here, and I had a llama-wool Peruvian sweater. I still have it. Hair like this, beard like this and a big bag like this. I was post-hippie or something. Our friend wanted to show off his wildest boyfriend to the most glamorous girl he knew, and he wanted to show off the most glamorous girl he knew to his wildest boyfriend. And thank God I met her. With her, I was very daring, like I had never been before. She was fascinating to me, like a muse. Of course, I had girlfriends and boyfriends at the same time, but I never separated them. I always told girls I was with a guy and I'd say to boys I was with a girl, you know. I never could separate them. It was my own way of being, and so, Françoise got divorced, and we began living together.

The Parisian life

At the time, Lacroix was working on a dissertation on dress in 18th-century French painting at the Sorbonne, and had enrolled in a programme in museum studies at the École du Louvre, one of France's most prestigious universities for art history and archaeology. He waited until 1989 to marry Françoise. 'When I signed with Arnault, I had to travel a lot,' he recalls, 'and if something happened when I was flying, I had to protect her.'

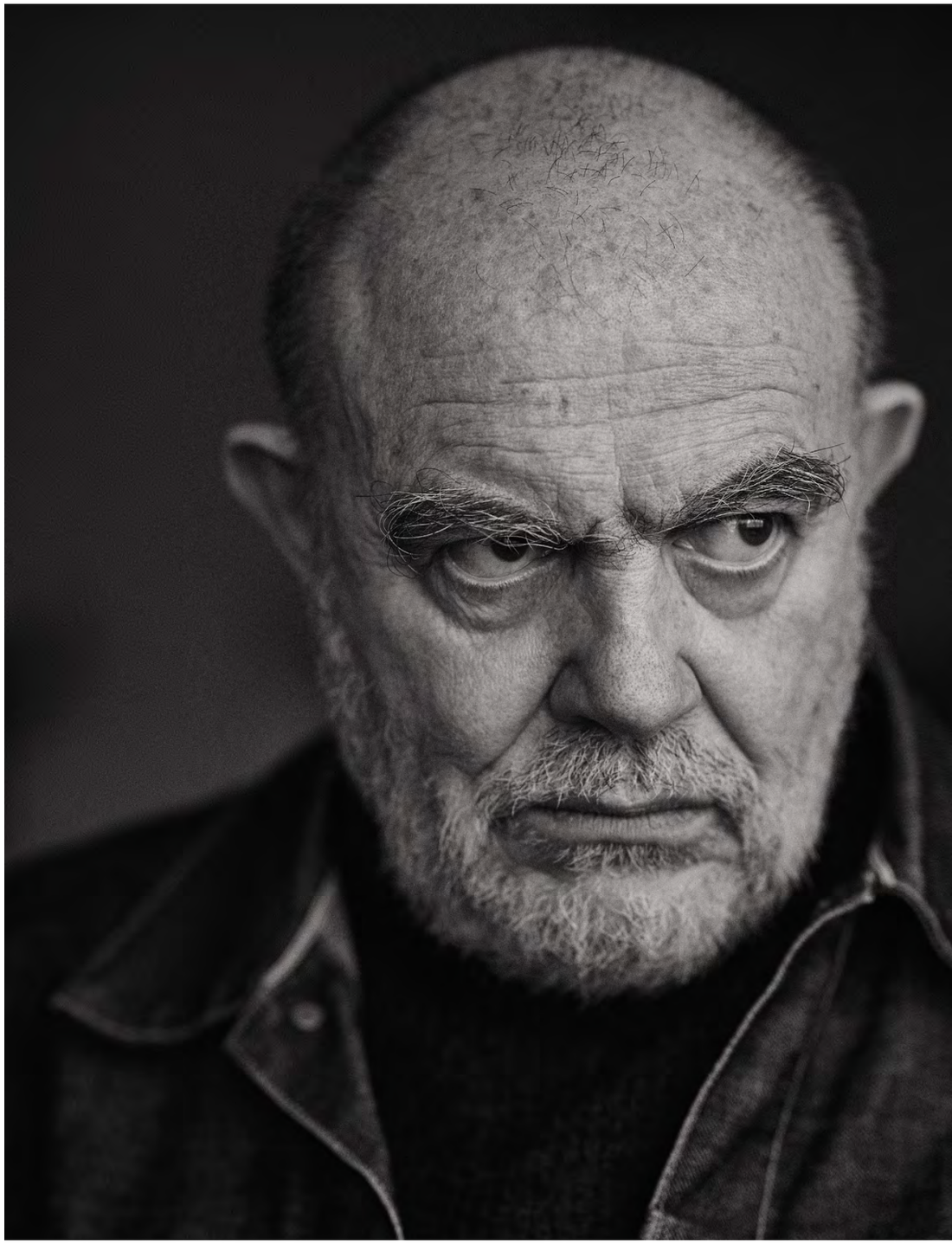
You came to Paris to be a fashion curator. What made you want that?

The past. Living in Arles was like living in a museum – the past was so much more important than the future. I only became really aware of the future in the year 2000. Before that, I was only interested in the past; I was afraid of the present and didn't care about the future. My work was always speaking about museums, never inventing new things. It was just the matter of remaking the old. I was inspired by something Goethe said about how the future is the past revisited from the present, that we can't build the future without stopping by the past. That was my motto. At the time, there was no museum of fashion: the Galliera was closed;[12] the Musée de la Mode didn't exist yet. So I was preparing to become a fashion curator without a fashion museum. I was in love with the Victoria & Albert Museum in London; my dream was to be at the V&A.

So what were you going to do with this qualification?

I was just trying to please my parents, to have a little bit of money, to be in Paris – and it was exciting. I had the most exciting teacher at the Sorbonne. Monsieur Thuillier[13] was a specialist in Poussin and Caravaggio, and the courses were like, 'Wow!' At the École du Louvre, we had all the Louvre curators as teachers. I could have been a student forever; I loved listening to brilliant and bright people. Subconsciously, I knew I would never be a curator, but I trusted my tutors. I didn't know what my future would be, but I thought maybe as a fashion illustrator, not as a designer. When I arrived at the Sorbonne, I told Monsieur Thuillier that I wanted to do something about how fashion was always inspired by the past, how there was nothing new: Charles Worth inspired by the 17th and 18th centuries; Paul Poiret looking back at the First Empire; Elsa Schiaparelli inspired by Napoleon III; Dior inspired by the turn of the century; and Saint Laurent inspired by the 1940s. I had seen this as a process that took about 30 years, but my professor looked at me like he didn't really

'I had girlfriends and boyfriends at the same time, but I never separated them. I always told girls I was with a guy and I'd say to boys I was with a girl.'



understand. He said, 'I would much prefer you to do something about the colour in Italian paintings of the 17th century.' Poor me. I didn't do it; that's why I'm not a curator.

So how did you make the jump to actually *making* clothes? Did Françoise help you?

I was more and more bored by my studies. I was studying at the Louvre and the Sorbonne because I was supposed to do this competition that museums in France do every year to find new curators. I did it, but I didn't win. I was upset because I was used to being first. If ever I were second at school, my parents would punish me. It was easy in Arles, but not in Paris! So I took it as a sign. Then a friend of Françoise's saw my sketches and she said, 'You're complaining that your history of art courses are boring? Are you crazy? You're *made* for fashion!' She sent me to Marie Rucki at Studio Berçot.[14] Forty years ago, she was the queen. She looked at my things and said, 'You're too old for my school, but I'll put you in touch with designers. I'll write some letters for you to Marc Bohan, Angelo Tarlazzi, Pierre Bergé, Karl Lagerfeld.' At the time, it was so easy, you could just call Karl's secretary, and she would say, 'Sure, how about next week?' And Karl would spend the afternoon with you if he liked your book. I wasn't thinking about fashion, though; I was thinking about costume design. Françoise and I were buying vintage things from flea markets or fabric offcuts from Vionnet and Schiaparelli at this wonderful boutique on Rue du Bac. I wanted to do something in movies, with my knowledge of all the period costume. Karl was very helpful because he felt that I was much more a costume maker than fashion designer. He sent me a lot of letters over the following weeks, recommending me to people in the theatre. But it didn't work. Then Françoise's friend, the one who sent me to Berçot to begin with, told us about Jean-Jacques Picart,[15] a friend of hers who was starting out in PR and was in charge of Mugler and Montana. So Françoise met with him and went to work with him. She was responsible for Guy Paulin and Popy Moreni.[16]

The first job I had when I joined Jean-Jacques's office in 1978 was to organize Helmut Lang's first show, in Vienna. I was in charge of getting the models, all the top girls of the time. The only one who didn't make it was Mounia,[17] who missed the flight, at six in the morning. The show was at the Palais Trautson and it was very Mugler-inspired, with skirts opening with zips, a fan of colourful fabric. Helmut Lang and I fell in love a little bit. We were close for years because we were living on Rue des Beaux Arts and he was at the Hôtel des Beaux Arts. We had the most spirited Christmas relationship – he gave me the most amazing things for Christmas, very simple but remarkable.

That was just when Picart had agreed to become a consultant for Hermès. Jean-Louis Dumas[18] had taken over and he wanted to change everything. He hired Madame de Vésian,[19] a very tough aristocratic lady from outside the house, and she needed an assistant. Jean-Jacques told Françoise and me that there were two positions, one with him in PR and the other with Madame de Vésian. Françoise said, 'I'd much prefer to work with Guy Paulin, and you'd prefer to work with girls.' And that is how I started as a designer, in 1979. I learned everything about designing a collection from Madame de Vésian.

In January 1980, Lacroix left Hermès and began designing accessories for Guy Paulin. When Paulin took over from Gianni Versace at Byblos, Lacroix became responsible for accessories in both collections.

I spent two years with Guy. Jean-Jacques Picart was also a consultant for Jun Ashida, the Japanese couturier who designed for the Empress.[20] He needed some advice, so I was also doing capsule collections for him. I had such beautiful materials to work with. That was the first time I did my own outfits. Then, on a flight back from Tokyo, Monsieur Picart told me the house of Jean Patou was looking for a designer and, because of my success at Hermès, he was going to show them my book. I was the youngest, the least known and therefore the cheapest, so they asked to see me at Patou. It was over anyway with Guy Paulin because he was having problems with the Girombelli family at Byblos. I had all the accessories I'd done for Guy, I added some pieces from Ashida, and some looks from a year of freelancing in Italy, so I had things to show. Jean-Jacques had launched Inès de la Fressange during a Cacharel show, and we'd become friends, so she agreed to model my looks for the Patou family.

'The first job I had when I joined Jean-Jacques Picart's PR office in 1978 was to organize Helmut Lang's first show, at the Palais Trautson in Vienna.'

Just Jean-Jacques and her alone; I didn't attend. Then they asked to meet with me, and I was hired in January 1982.

The Jean Patou years

It was like a movie. There were rumours that Roy Gonzales, the former designer, had tried to kill himself in the studio in November or December.[21] When I arrived at Patou, I discovered a photograph of a young Karl Lagerfeld with a model. He had been at Patou from 1957 to 1964, and there is a famous picture of him sitting at a table in a high chair with a model looking at an engraving on the wall. I had the same table, the same chair, the same engraving as Karl Lagerfeld. Jean Patou had died in 1936, but his office had never been changed, not even the carpet. I loved that. The studio was in a wonderful 18th-century building in the Rue Saint-Florentin. Have you ever seen the French movie from the 1940s called *Falbalas*?[22] It's a favourite of Jean Paul Gaultier's and mine. It takes place during the couture shows, and we knew that atmosphere. Jean Paul worked at Patou as well, as an assistant to Angelo Tarlazzi.[23]

My first show at Patou was a drama. I had no sense of a budget and I thought I would love to have an atmosphere – Morocco, the 18th century, blah blah blah. I showed a group of each, and then a little bit of everything at the end. The following day, *Le Quotidien de Paris*, which was a well-read paper at the time, said the collection looked like it was done by the *coursier*, the delivery guy. For the second collection, I decided to be choosier. I used just two colours, red and black. The morning after that show, *Le Quotidien* was raving. From that day, the Patou family was very supportive. The third collection for Spring/Summer 1983 was all naive hand-painting, with big hats. It was the first time I dared to be me. The Patou family pushed me out onto the runway; I was crying, holding flowers.

I wasn't there to express my own ideas; I was there to express Patou. I loved that – it was like doing a movie. I was still in my theatre thing; I was not a fashion designer. It was like Cecil Beaton doing the costumes for that musical about Chanel with Katherine Hepburn.[24] Doing fashion, but for a movie. You had Montana and Mugler doing ready-to-wear at the time, with the inspiration coming from Hollywood. I thought we gave it more meaning doing it in couture, because all this movie stuff was much more couture than ready-to-wear. But a lot of people stopped talking to Jean-Jacques – they didn't know who I was – because he was working at Patou. They felt he was a traitor, that he had been supporting the new *créateurs* like Montana and Mugler, so what was he doing with this dying old lady of haute couture?

For each collection, we made a videotape for customers, with a little bit of production. At the beginning of the tape for my third season is Inès arriving for the show. Her grandmother, now very old but very elegant, had been the wife of a famous minister before the war.[25] And on the tape, Inès is showing her grandmother a picture of herself in a look from Karl's very first couture collection for Chanel. It was a nice moment. Karl understood that couture was something that could belong to the future.

For each collection, I defined a connection between Monsieur Patou and me. A famous French caricaturist from the 1920s called Sem[26] drew a cartoon of Patou at a bullfight in Biarritz, and this spoke to me. This was kind of an homage to my father, doing something about bullfighting. People felt that subconsciously it was my roots. At the time, the models were so crazy. I gave Anna Bayle a tape of *Carmen Jones*[27] to show her what a bullfight looked like, and she showed up at fittings with Betty Lago, the brunette from Brazil. I had so many sketches I was mixing together – the dresses were different at the front than the back. Anna understood this perfectly, because she was going out first. Hebe Dorsey from the *Herald Tribune* and John Fairchild from *Women's Wear Daily* came and raved.

'My first Patou show was a drama. The next day, *Le Quotidien de Paris* said the collection looked like it was done by the *coursier*, the delivery guy.'

That was later. Who supported you from the start?

Suzy Menkes was aware from the beginning, and I loved Carrie Donovan from the *New York Times*. She came one day, I didn't know who she was. She asked what my favourite piece was; it was very baroque, with Lesage embroidery on the front. Ahn Duong was our house model at the time and they took a picture of her on the balcony wearing it. It took five minutes. Then they left and I forgot about it. I don't know how many weeks later, it showed up as a double page in the *Times* magazine.[28] When the Patou family went to New York to launch a new perfume, Carrie invited

us to lunch at the *New York Times*' dining room. The family was so boring, and before dessert arrived, she said, 'I'm sorry, I'm in a hurry, I have to take Christian.' We left and spent the afternoon with Donna Karan, who was very welcoming. I adored what she was doing.

So this was all before the pouf skirt sensation?
No, the very first pouf skirt was in the very first Patou collection in 1981. Before I was hired by Patou, I was in a hotel room waiting for Françoise and working on a collage. There were some fashion engravings from the late 19th century in *Figaro* magazine and I cut the dresses short and added my favourite black-stockinged legs. And then, because I was hired at the very last minute by Patou, I had to use everything I had, including that collage. So my first mini-skirt was inspired by that. It was like a bee, black and yellow stripes, very short.

But nobody said anything about a new silhouette?
Nobody saw it. And I didn't do any in the second collection.

I remember there was always the controversy about the pouf skirt and Vivienne Westwood and her mini-crini.
Their arriving at the same time, yes. I became aware of that later. But it's like, 'Who invented photography, the English guy or the French guy?' I think each generation has the same universe, just in different countries.

Were you friends with Vivienne?
Of course! It's been a long time since we've seen each other, but in 1991, John Fairchild asked me to choose one designer from Italy, one designer from Great Britain, and one from the States for a fashion summit in Japan. So I chose Franco Moschino, Isaac Mizrahi and Vivienne, and we spent weeks in Japan. It was a wonderful time, very warm, very supportive. Each night, one of us would organize a party for the others.

I'm trying to pin down which collection it was when the pouf exploded.
We had one very successful collection, with a dress on Anh Duong. She wore a Chinese hat. 1985? 1986? It was on the cover of *W*, the issue that celebrated the Statue of Liberty's anniversary.[29] This is when Hebe Dorsey fell in love with the house. She was very ill with cancer, but she did a lot to introduce me to the States.[30]

When I was starting to be bored at Patou, and a friend set up a lunch at Caviar Kaspia with Colombe Nicholas, Dior's chairwoman in New York, and she said, 'Why not meet Bernard Arnault, the young guy who just bought Dior?' So she set up a lunch with Monsieur Arnault in December 1986 at Le Bristol. I was absorbed in my dislike for the Patou collection I was trying to finish, and he was going skiing with his children, and finally he said, 'I have to go, what would you like?' And I said, 'A couture house with ready-to-wear, jeans, perfume and accessories. I don't care if my name's on it, but I want something that goes from very deluxe to very affordable.' And he said, 'OK.'

At the time, I was still working with Ashida in Tokyo, so I went to Japan just before the January collections, and Hebe called me to say, 'I think Mr Arnault is very much thinking about your meeting and if I have any advice, it is to get a very good lawyer. I know one, he's Johnny Halliday and Catherine Deneuve's lawyer.' So I met with this guy and we signed an agreement and the day before the Patou collection, I met with Mr Arnault, who said, 'We sign next week.' It was still Financière Agache, it wasn't yet LVMH.[31] But he had Dior and I think he wanted to prove that he was able to launch a new couture house. It was a challenge.

So the day before the show, I was under the table calling Hebe and John Fairchild. I knew I'd be leaving the day of the show. I was even thinking of taking my suitcases and walking off the end of catwalk with them. I was so excited! When Monsieur Arnault was sure, I called Patou's chairman Monsieur de Moüy[32] in Corsica and told him I had something to say, but not on the phone. We had breakfast the next morning, a Saturday, in Paris and I told him all about Monsieur Arnault and he said that was wonderful, and he hoped I'd do my fragrance with him. But when I arrived at Patou on Monday, he was very upset. And my last vision of the house was São Schlumberger,[33] a huge client who bought half the collection. They delivered what she bought, but stopped everything else, including the amazing ad campaign that Sarah Moon had done. And then there was a very large lawsuit, which they won. The fine was 10 million French francs.[34] I didn't

'Bernard Arnault asked, "What would you like?" And I said, "A couture house with ready-to-wear, jeans, perfume and accessories." And he said, OK.'

know I was so special, but they said they launched me, made me famous.

La maison Christian Lacroix

In April 1987, the house of Christian Lacroix opened at 73 Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré in Paris's eighth arrondissement.

Dawn Mello at Bergdorf Goodman did an enormous job, because she brought Lacroix to New York. And Blaine Trump. I love her, I still see her. We go to the same hotel in Barcelona. I remember my first meeting with all those beautiful, bored young women, the Ladies Who Lunch; I asked to go to the loo and I went down a corridor lined with Matisse paintings. It was unbelievable! We showed downtown, under the World Trade Center. They bought palm trees from Santa Fe for the Winter Garden; it was crushed in 9/11.

That first show was the event Julie Baumgold wrote about in *New York* magazine, a week after the financial crash in October 1987. It had the subtitle, 'Lacroix's Crash Chic', and the title on the cover was 'Dancing on the Lip of the Volcano' – which is one of my favourites ever. Have you read that story recently? It's as if someone wrote a story about Marie Antoinette during the French Revolution.[35]
I wasn't conscious of it being like that. Well, sometimes, not every day. But Julie was good, she told everything just the way it was, not to be mean. I *was* dancing on the volcano. I remember that night with girls and guys telling me, 'You're going to be a star'; while at the same time, others were saying, 'My husband's associate jumped out his window last week.' Being part of a very large New York event, it was something. On my table was Hebe, and Bianca Jagger wearing black gloves, and Blaine and Robert Trump, and Donald and Ivana, because she was a very faithful customer starting at Patou. Donald said, Congratulations, it's a big hit! Blah blah blah.

That *New York* cover showed you with Marie Seznec[36] as your bride at the end of the show. She was such a big part of your story. When did you meet her?
I met Marie through Françoise and Éric Bergère, who was interning with Françoise at Hermès. We shared a flat with him, and he later took over from me at Ashida. She was a student at Berçot and she had had some pictures in *Elle* because she had white hair – which was very rare at the time – and the most beautiful husband ever. He was in charge of menswear for Mugler during Thierry's time. Marie was starting to do a few fittings for Éric and Françoise at Hermès, but she was looking for some more work, so I hired her as an intern model at Patou in 1984, 1985. She was very helpful for the white-haired customers. In those days, we had to have a show twice a week in the salon. It was a Chambre Syndicale[37] law that doesn't exist anymore. Six models, every week, for the six months of each season. By the end, it was only old ladies who were attending.

I thought it was audacious of you to make Marie the face of Patou, and, later, Lacroix. It was daring to have a woman who was so different to everyone else in fashion.
Everything different is the way to move forward. We are not here to give people what they already like, but what they don't know they like yet. Whoever said that, it's one of my mottos. I worked outside fashion; I never felt that I worked inside the fashion world. When it was the time of the top models in the 1990s, I didn't do any of that. I worked only once with Linda Evangelista; she was too impressive, too monumental. Carla Bruni, yes, Naomi Campbell, yes, even though she was so difficult to work with. But I was in love with Christy Turlington, and Yasmeen Ghauri, though she smelled of garlic – we both smelled of garlic.

'We had to have a show twice a week in the salon. It was an old Chambre Syndicale law: six models, every week, for the six months of each season.'

Indulge me while I steal a leaf from Julie Baumgold's article: 'the clothes are shocking. They are violations. They break every mother's Rule of Good Taste: Don't let your slip stick out, don't wear orange and purple, don't wear pink and red, don't mix plaids and stripes or checks and stripes, don't be too fancy, don't overdo. They are just the way every six-year-old girl wants to dress before her mother gets hold of her with the Rules of Good Taste. His colors burst out. They are perverse. They are revolutionary and funny. Straw flowers. A dress that is all slip, mini-poufs, huge panniers, bows and black lace hanging all over, clothes standing out from the body, heart-shaped bustiers thick with flowers and beads, fuchsia shoes, and orange ruched crinolines. On the head, straw platters, straw cache-chignons, *straw thimbles with a rose sticking out the top; green satin bags with branch handles.' That show was the beginning of Lacroix's eight-year relationship, one that was eccentric, wondrous but ultimately testing. From Arnault's perspective, it was his opportunity to prove that he could defy tradition and create an haute-couture house from scratch. You could almost imagine him as a Medici-like patron, except for one problem – the Lacroix business became a money pit.*

The Arnault experience

Are you still in touch with Monsieur Arnault?
A French journalist interviewed me and later interviewed him, and she asked, 'Would you like to have lunch with Christian?' and he said, 'Of course, with pleasure.' Monsieur Arnault was very supportive at the beginning. I like him, I *love* him.

I have vivid memories of how unhappy you were sometimes, though. You complained how the Arnaults would go to Ozwald Boateng's men's collections for Givenchy,[38] but they would never come to yours. What was the problem?
I think Monsieur Arnault was very disappointed with the unsuccessful sales of C'est la Vie, my perfume – he wanted a return on his investment in the couture house.[39] Because my fragrance was made and sold by Dior Perfumes, everyone who sold those perfumes ordered a big amount. The fragrance itself was really wonderful. I wanted Garouste and Bonetti,[40] who made the furniture for my shop, to do the packaging, but it was too expensive, so they were fired. What LVMH did was not so bad: the shape of the bottle was inspired by a stone from the plain around Arles. Mythology says Hercules put the stones there. I collect them. The cap was coral, which was my lucky charm. Someone said it looked like a heart with arteries sticking out the top, and in France, they wrote how disgusting that was. It was hard to get people to buy it, especially because I wasn't so well-known. In LA, New York, Milan, yes, but in Scandinavia, no. I was just famous in fashion.

Lacroix's last couture collection for his house at LVMH was Spring 2005. 'If life in fashion were fair, Christian Lacroix would be awarded a grace under pressure medal for turning out his extraordinary spring haute couture collection,' Sarah Mower wrote for Style.com. His name was acquired from LVMH by Leon, Jerome and Simon Falic, Florida-based brothers who made their money in duty-free retail.

At the very beginning, they provided me with money, with people. I didn't have a real financial chairman; they hired a girl from Chanel.

You had been losing money, and you were tired of losing money. You have no bad feelings against Arnault? It was just what happened.
In some ways, it was my fault; I was in a bad position at a bad moment. I was not able to be my own promoter, as an American designer does, like when Donna [Karan] came with her own suitcase and showed her things. I was never able to do this. If I am forced I can do it very well, but it was not in my nature when it was needed. I much prefer to be with my friends than promoting the label. Peter Lindbergh was in love, almost crazy about one of my friends. He lived in Arles; he brought all the top models to Arles in the 1990s, but he never photographed for me! I much preferred having Peter as a friend, to be drinking with him and not using his relationship with Linda [Evangelista] for doing whatever. I was too shy or… I don't know what. But I didn't understand that at the time, so it *is* my fault!

In 2008, Lacroix was guest artistic director of the Rencontres d'Arles, the renowned photography festival, and curated a large-scale exhibition in the city's Musée Réattu.

'Arnault was very disappointed with the unsuccessful sales of my perfume C'est la Vie – he wanted a return on his investment in the couture house.'

I was in charge of so many photography exhibitions and I also did a show at the Musée Réattu, one of the museums from my childhood. I had Old Masters and 18th-century paintings meeting the contemporary art of my friends. The exhibition was extended until the end of the year and people were still queuing during the holidays. I loved doing it, the *carte blanche*, the total freedom. This was in 2008. I was busy, I wasn't really conscious that the end of Lacroix was coming. We closed in July 2009. I was sad for all the workers, but it was really a relief.

Would you describe yourself as fragile?
Yes, I think so. I survived; I'm a Taurus. I face big things, but I'm destroyed by little things. I didn't understand the fashion world. The It bag? This was

not talking to me. Fashion is something helping you in life, something for your self-expression, to make you feel secure. I stopped being interested when it became these big groups. Now there is nothing in fashion weeks. It is all about advertising and nobody can write anything sincere, or it's between the lines. I loved Karl as a human being, he was such a brain, but some of his collections for Chanel were… well, nobody wore that, because they couldn't! The gap gets wider and wider each season between the runway and real life, even in the upper levels of society. Now everyone is so aware of the scrutiny; they can't take any risks any more. For me, the question is: is fashion a way to be like your neighbour or is it a way of being yourself, different from your neighbour? Nothing is *ugly* nowadays. If you look at everyone's Instagram accounts, there is beautiful food, beautiful flowers, beautiful muscles… everything is too beautiful. Bring back ugliness! Baudelaire said there is no beauty without something bizarre.[41]

The (un)holy extravagance of Lacroix's collections demands sympathetic institutions for its preservation. That wildly successful exhibition he curated at the Musée Réattu the year before his company closed, with its Old Masters and contemporary art, was a lesson in the power of the archive. Lacroix calls himself a hoarder, but unfortunately he never kept much of his own work. He has passed his favourite pieces on to the V&A, the Metropolitan Museum in New York, and the Kyoto Costume Institute.

I was not so conscious, except for a couple of outfits. Like the wedding dress made from the red bullfighter's cape [haute couture, Autumn/Winter 2002]. Madonna wore it, but that's not why it's my favourite. That was a hard season; we had no money; we couldn't afford expensive models. A friend gifted me this cape. I redyed it, Lesage embroidered it. My other favourite was another wedding dress, the very last number of the very last show [haute couture, Autumn/Winter 2009]. Again, we had no money. The Falics didn't want me to show, so they gave me not a euro. I fought to have this collection, and I succeeded in doing it with old materials and everyone's friendship. All the agencies were so kind; they knew it was the last show, so we had all the most famous girls for free. The seamstresses, the shoemakers, the jewellers worked for nothing. We had the decor for free. But that dress isn't my favourite because it's the last. I loved it because it looked like an icon – I was inspired by *Anna Karenina*, and Vlada, one of the young Russian girls, wore it. I felt very guilty about not crying at the last collection, not to be part of the sorrow. Everyone else – the models, my friends – was crying. But for me, it was the beginning of a new life.

I'd been discussing my archives with the Falics, but then everything stopped, and now I don't know where the archives are. They escaped. They were in the suburbs, but we discovered recently they had been moved somewhere. But we don't know where. It's very tricky. They agreed when the Met asked for the last bride and the top with the Lesage-embroidered cross from Anna Wintour's first *Vogue* cover [for 2018's *Heavenly Bodies* exhibition], but if anybody asks for some pieces and they think I am behind it, they refuse. We're still in a lawsuit; it's been very expensive for me, but I want to win. I would like to have my name back – and my collections.

Lacroix needs some lace for his new theatrical endeavour, designing the costumes for director Michel Fau's production at the Opéra Comique of Adolphe Adam's 1836 operetta, Le Postillon de Lonjumeau. *The Algerian man who used to provide him with beautiful lace from China has closed down so after he's seen me into my car at the Hotel Amour, he's going to hunt for a new source in Montmartre. He'll soon begin work on Brecht's* Galileo *at the Comédie-Française for Éric Ruf and, in November, an audacious production of* The Marriage of Figaro *for US movie director James Gray at the Los Angeles Opera. He's busy.*

He also tells me that he feels most comfortable now in Barcelona, where the queer scene reminds him of the polymorphous Aquarian ideal of his teenage years in the late 1960s. 'If I met up on a street corner with the child I was,' Lacroix says, 'I could say, "I did it!" My only comfort is to think that what I was dreaming of as a child is now happening. I am lucky I get to work with the Comédie-Française and Opéra Garnier, and people are asking for period costumes. The white T-shirt and black suit is not me. Go to Zara. But I would like to go forward.'

'I felt very guilty about not crying at the last show. Everyone else – the models, my friends – was in tears. But for me, it was the beginning of a new life.'

Photography assistants: Ollivier Hersart, Vincent Gussemburger. Digital operator: David Martin.

Will you ever come back to fashion?
Sometimes I dream of being back in fashion, but not with my name. But no, no more fashion. I am very happy. Last autumn, I did a book with Gallimard, illustrating Madame de La Fayette's *La Princesse de Clèves*, which is the first real French novel, from the 16th century. I wanted it to be a turning point because I wanted to experiment with new mediums. I did ceramics, old paintings, lithographs. This is a question I had as a child. Am I painter or not? I don't think so. But my guts, my enthusiasm, is doing paintings today. Creating something. Escaping from anything.

I had a lover at the beginning of the 1970s, a wonderful guy, Michel, who died from AIDS. The last time I saw him was at the perfume launch for C'est la Vie in the 1990s. It was just the two of us at six in the morning, at the party. We had not been lovers for ages, but still we were very close. I introduced all my lovers from before to Françoise and thank God we all became friends. Michel was the same colour as the marble of the walls. And I said, 'You must do some tests', but he didn't want to. He didn't want to know. And then one month later he died. Later, his family and I chose to do a documentary about him. They had the idea of putting some paintings in this documentary. They asked me to sketch on the wall of his house, which was about to be sold. And after they said that, I was drawing in a different way. I felt like my pen was connected by a ribbon to him. I sketched like I never did before, so different, so inspired, so strong. It was coming from elsewhere. I discovered myself as a painter that very day. Then later I did some big canvases and I was trying to capture his body. He was there.

How long ago was that?
Four months ago. I feel painting is perhaps something I have to do. But I must say that the theatre part of my life is most important to me, because of my grandfather. I said it before: I am afraid of life.

Real life?
Real life, I think so. Two weeks ago, I had a dream I was in a New York hotel and Blaine Trump was there, showing me some golden patchworks she wanted me to make into a special outfit. And I was supposed to have a photo taken wearing a bullfighter's cape with her! This is the first year I've had dreams about my old job. It was a relief when it ended though. The world had changed so much.

1. The Second Empire began in 1852 when Louis Napoléon declared himself Emperor of the French, and ended in 1870 with his defeat by the Prussians at the Battle of Sedan. It was marked by rapid modernization (including the rebuilding of Paris) and industrialization, improving living standards and endemic corruption, a heavily decorative design style that blended neo-classicism, the rococo and the baroque, and the creation of haute couture by Paris-based English designer Charles Frederick Worth.

2. *The Leopard*, Luchino Visconti's 1963 adaptation of Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's novel about aristocratic decline and bourgeois social climbing in 1860's Sicily, starred Burt Lancaster and Claudia Cardinale.

3. Jacques Wilhelm, then director of the Musée Carnavalet – a Parisian museum dedicated to the French capital – published his *Histoire de la Mode*, a 94-page book about fashion, in 1955.

4. The *baccalauréat* is the French national qualification taken by students aged 17 and 18. It was first established by Napoléon in 1808.

5. Born in 1896, Marguerite de Wagner grew up in the Parisian couture house established by her parents in 1902. In 1929, she bought the Maison Rouff, renamed it Maggy Rouff, and began producing the highly wearable, singular fashion that would make her name. Marguerite retired in 1948, leaving her daughter Anne-Marie as designer. Maggy Rouff was sold in 1971 and closed definitively in 1979.

6. Built in 1722, the Élysées Palace is the official residence of the French president.

7. The 1937 Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne was a world's fair organized in Paris to highlight 'art and technology in modern life'. The German and Soviet pavilions were located opposite each other near the Eiffel Tower and their face-off – giant eagle and swastika versus huge socialist-realist sculpture – was seen as symbolic of the political struggle in Europe that would end in war two years later.

8. The condition, now known in English as 'persecutory delusions', is described in a 2016 article in *The Lancet* as 'threat beliefs, developed in the context of genetic and environmental risk, and maintained by several psychological processes [...] reasoning biases, and the use of safety-seeking strategies.' It is often associated with paranoid schizophrenia.

9. Vincent Van Gogh was committed to Hôtel-Dieu-Saint-Ésprit hospital in Arles on December 23, 1888, after cutting off a portion of his left ear. He returned to the hospital after a second breakdown in February 1889, and in June of that year painted *Garden of the Hospital in Arles*, which shows the view from his room.

10. Durer was a high-end shoe and leather goods label, whose main store was at 74 Avenue du Champs-Élysées. It is unclear when Durer disappeared as a brand.

11. The original celebrity hairdresser, Vidal Sassoon (1928-2012) revolutionized women's hair styling by moving towards simple cuts that needed little care. He was also a committed anti-fascist and Zionist, and fought in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.

12. Palais Galliera–Musée de la Mode de la Ville de Paris opened in 1977 and displayed a collection previously held at the Musée du Costume, which had been founded in 1907 by the Société de l'Histoire du Costume.

13. Jacques Thuillier (1928-2011) was an art historian and one of the world's leading experts in Nicolas Poussin.

14. Marie Rucki became head of Parisian fashion school Studio Berçot in 1971.

15. Jean-Jacques Picart is a fashion consultant who in the early 1970s created a fashion PR agency that represented brands including Kenzo, Hermès, Kenzo, Chloé, Jil Sander and Patou. He was crucial to Bernard Arnault's decision to support the creation of the house of Christian Lacroix and worked on its communications from 1987 to 1999.

16. Guy Paulin (1936-1990) was a designer who worked for Dorothée Bis, Max Mara, Rodier, and Byblos; he succeeded Karl Lagerfeld at Chloé in 1983, but remained only a year. Born in 1947 in Turin, Popy Moreni opened her own design studio in 1973 and began producing clothing renowned for its theatricality and commedia dell'arte inspiration.

17. Mounia or Monique-Antoine Orosemane is a Martinique-born model and painter. In the 1980s, she was Yves Saint Laurent's favourite model, and in 2008 told a French radio station that the designer had made her 'proud of her colour'. Fellow model Marie Helvin told the *Independent* newspaper in the same year that Mouina 'was so difficult. A lot of people didn't take to her, but he adored her and allowed her to behave as badly as she liked'.

18. Jean-Louis Dumas-Hermès, the great-great-grandson of Hermès' founder Thierry Hermès began working at the house in 1964, and became chairman in 1978 after his father's death. He immediately began moulding Hermès to his vision: less old-fashioned, more globally minded. Between 1993, when he took the company public and his retirement in 2006, revenue quadrupled and net profit rose tenfold. Dumas-Hermès died on May 1, 2010, in Paris.

19. Nicole de Vésian (1916-1996) was a textile designer at Hermès who, after her retirement in 1986, dedicated herself to La Louve, her celebrated and still-influential garden in Provence.

20. Jun Ashida (1930-2018) was personal designer to Empress Michiko from 1966 to 1976.

21. Roy Gonzales arrived in Paris in 1963 from the Philippines. In 1998, he returned to his native country to take over his family's clothing business, R.T. Paris Haute Couture. Based in Quezon City, it has been operating for over 115 years.

22. *Falbalas* (1945), released as *Paris Frills* in English, was directed by Jacques Becker and tells the story of a couturier who falls in love with his best friend's fiancée. When she rejects him, he loses his mind and throws himself out of a window to his death.

23. Angelo Tarlazzi was head designer at Jean Patou from 1972 to 1977.

24. The musical *Coco*, based upon the life of Coco Chanel, was written by Alan J. Lerner, with music by André Previn; it opened on Broadway in 1969. Cecil Beaton, who designed the show's costumes, did not appreciate its star, Katharine Hepburn, writing in his diary: 'She is the egomaniac of all time … a raddled, rash-ridden, freckled, burnt, mottled, bleached and wizened piece of decaying matter.'

25. Inès de la Fressange's grandmother, Simone Lazard, a member of the Lazard banking family, married left-wing politician Maurice Petsche in 1937.

26. While Georges Goursat (1863-1934), or Sem, is best known for his satirical images of the Belle Époque, he worked and was friends with Coco Chanel and Jean Patou after the First World War, producing advertising images for both.

27. An adaptation of Georges Bizet's *Carmen* with an all African-American cast, including Harry Belafonte and Dorothy Dandridge, *Carmen Jones* was directed by Otto Preminger and released in 1954.

28. The story, entitled 'The Swagger of Christian Lacroix', was published in the *New York Times Magazine*, on September 6, 1987.

29. The Statue of Liberty was dedicated on October 28, 1886.

30. Hebe Dorsey died of cancer on December 28, 1987. John Fairchild told the *New York Times* that: 'She invented the idea of reviewing fashion like a play and she always did it with a razor, not a knife.'

31. Financière Agache remains a holding company owned by Groupe Arnault, and was the company through which the Arnault family owned Dior until the house was bought 100% by the group and absorbed into LVMH in 2017. An article about that transaction in French business magazine *Challenges* was headlined: 'How Bernard Arnault earned more than €6 billion in one day.'

32. Jean de Moüy was the great-nephew of Jean Patou and ran the *maison* Patou. A 1998 article in French magazine *L'Express* noted that he liked to hunt ducks in Argentina.

33. São Schlumberger (1929-2007) was a Portuguese-born socialite, philanthropist, patron and art collector, who was married to French-American oil tycoon Pierre Schlumberger.

34. Jean de Moüy and Patou sued Bernard Arnault and Christian Lacroix for *concurrence déloyale* (unfair competition) in the Tribunal de Commerce in Paris. Moüy accused Arnault of poaching Lacroix, giving him no time to put in place a successor, which led to a significant loss of income. The verdict in the case, delivered one year and two weeks after the announcement of the creation of the label Christian Lacroix by Arnault, states that, by leaving straight after the presentation of his last collection for Patou, Lacroix used it as free publicity for his own new label, 'transforming it in terms of publicity into a Lacroix collection'. Arnault and Lacroix lost the case and were ordered to pay Moüy and Patou 10 million francs (€2.5 million, inflation-adjusted for 2019).

35. Julie Baumgold's story 'Dancing on the Lip of the Volcano' was published in the November 30, 1987, issue of *New York*. It begins: 'A safe eight minutes late, Christian Lacroix walks into the Grill Room of the Four Seasons and asks for Ralph Lauren. … He throws his arm over the seat, nonchalant, though he has arrived in New York with haute couture clothes and a collection called *Luxe* a week after the crash. Clothes of such brilliant luxury and defiance probably haven't been seen since eighteenth-century French aristocrats rattled in cars over the cobblestones on their way to the guillotine.'

36. Marie Seznac was a stylist, model, the face of Christian Lacroix, and director of haute couture at the label until its closure in 2009. She died of cancer in 2015, aged 57.

37. The Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture is the trade association of French couture.

38. Boateng was at Givenchy from 2003 to 2007.

39. In *L'Ange exterminateur*, his 2016 biography of Bernard Arnault, French journalist Airy Routier, writes: 'In 1990, Lacroix launched the perfume C'est la Vie, which, Arnault hoped, would finally allow him to earn some money, like Dior, 40 years earlier. But it was one of the biggest flops in the history of perfumery. And one of the rare failures that Bernard Arnault personally acknowledges.'

40. Élisabeth Garouste is a French designer and interior architect; Mattia Bonetti is a Swiss designer and photographer. Between the early 1980s and the turn of the millennium, they worked together on furniture, including their celebrated Barbares chair, and interiors, such as Lacroix stores.

41. In 1855, Charles Baudelaire wrote: 'The beautiful is always strange. I do not suggest that it is deliberately, coldly strange, for in that case it would be a monstrosity that had jumped the rails of life. I mean that it always contains a touch of strangeness, of unpremeditated and unconscious strangeness, and that it is this strangeness that makes its particularly beautiful.'

Christian Lacroix Archives 1987-2009

Photographs by Roe Ethridge
Styling by Katie Grand

Gabrielle wears Christian Lacroix multiple navy blue and white polka dot silk taffeta and silk chiffon ruched and ruffled ball gown with embroidered white guipure shoulder details, haute couture collection 38, Spring 2006, from TLP Consulting and private collection.

Gabrielle wears Christian Lacroix multiple navy blue and white polka dot silk taffeta and silk chiffon ruched and ruffled ball gown with embroidered white guipure shoulder details, haute couture collection 38, Spring 2006, from TLP Consulting and private collection. Leather peep toe shoes by Marc Jacobs.

Gabrielle wears Christian Lacroix acid-green wool boucle two-piece dress, haute couture collection 41, Autumn/Winter 2007 from TLP Consulting and private collection.

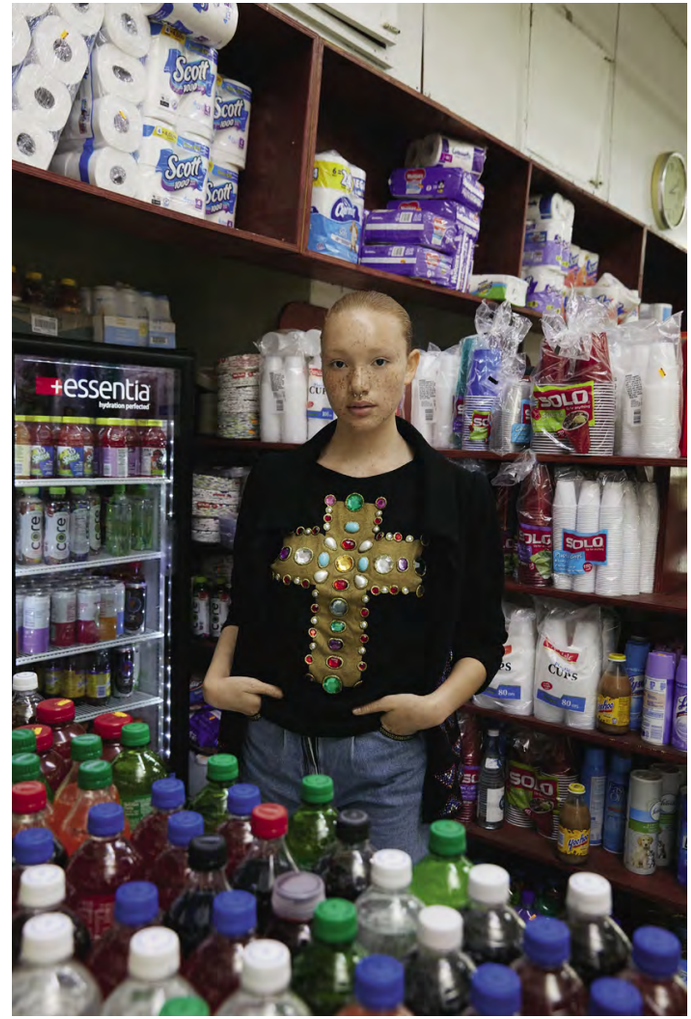
Christina wears vintage denim jacket with 1980s costume brooches from Vintage Vintage. Denim jeans from Reign Vintage.
Glasses, model's own. Jewellery (clockwise from top): 1980s enamel heart brooch from Archive Vintage;
1990s Christian Lacroix haute-couture brass brooch from the Covert Archives; large 1980s Christian Lacroix crystal heart brooch by DSF Antique Jewelry;
1990s Christian Lacroix multicoloued crystal and poured glass brooch; 1980s Christian Lacroix brooch from the Hirst Collection;
1980s Christian Lacroix gold brooch from This Old Thing London; large 1980s Christian Lacroix crystal heart brooch from DSF Vintage Jewelry.

Meghan wears 'Retenez-Moi' tiered crinoline dress in polka-dot wool, Christian Lacroix for Jean Patou,
haute couture, Spring/Summer 1987 from the Covert Archives; Hermione black velvet flats by Tabitha Simmons.

Ugbad wears Christian Lacroix red taffeta frock coat with raffia re-embroidered lace trim,
haute couture collection 38, Spring 2006, from TLP Consulting and private collection.
Vintage jeans from Levi's. Vintage boots from Circa Vintage, London. Black beanie with coque feathers by Marc Jacobs.

Ugbad wears Christian Lacroix ivory organza pleated tunic with Swarovski crystals and guipure lace.
Black double-faced wool crepe jet-embroidered jacket; astrakhan guipure and jet-embroidered cape with antique silver buttons,
ostrich collar and mink lining, haute couture collection 39, Autumn/Winter 2006,
from TLP Consulting and private collection. Black beanie with peacock herl feathers from Marc Jacobs.

Rose wears Christian Lacroix peridot taffeta ball skirt with fluting, hand painted and beaded bodice, royal moiré shirt jacket, haute couture collection 44, Spring 2009, from TLP Consulting and private collection.



Tehya wears Christian Lacroix black wool crepe smock jacket with cobalt and red metallic Lesage embroidery, haute couture collection 40, Spring 2007; 1990s Christian Lacroix embellished cross top from Designer Revival; vintage Levi's denim from Pop Boutique London.

Naomi wears Christian Lacroix lime-green silk jacquard jacket, haute couture collection 22, Spring 1998; lime-green silk faille skirt, haute couture collection 36, Spring 2005, from TLP Consulting and private collection; cream beanie with feathers by Marc Jacobs; green lurex socks by Marc Jacobs; vintage shoes from Cenci Vintage London.

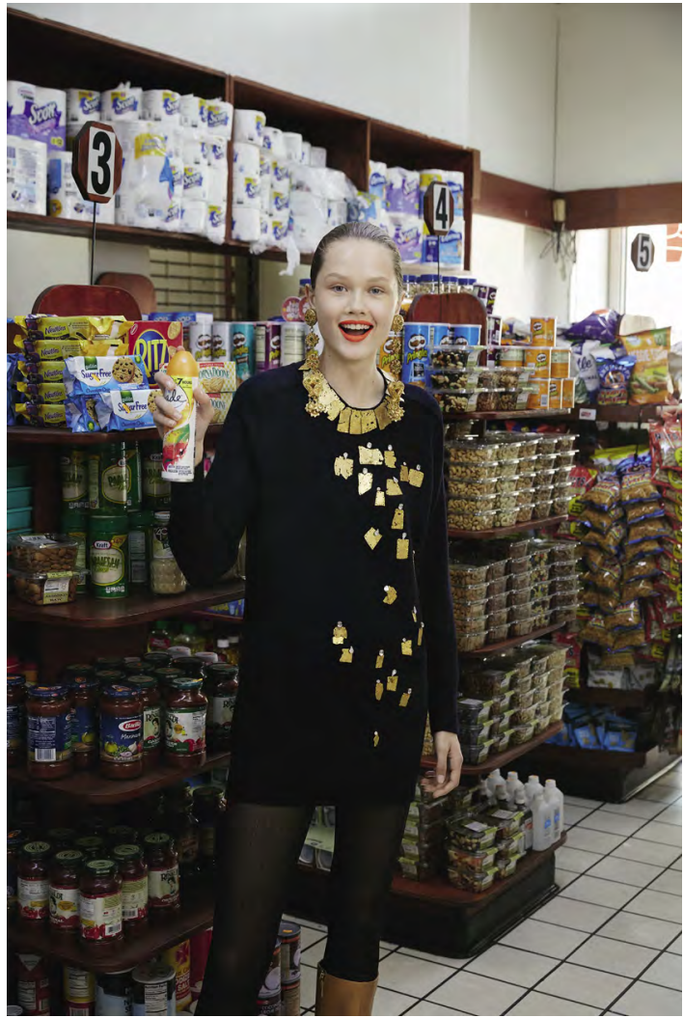
Remington wears vintage denim jacket from Beyond Retro; vintage vest from Cenci Vintage London; 1980s Christian Lacroix haute couture baroque-style crystal pendant/necklace from DSF Antique Jewelry.

Chen wears Christian Lacroix black taffeta fluted skirt with black jet-crystal top and black silk taffeta bolero, haute couture collection 40, Spring 2007, from TLP Consulting and private collection; black beanie with coque feathers by Marc Jacobs.

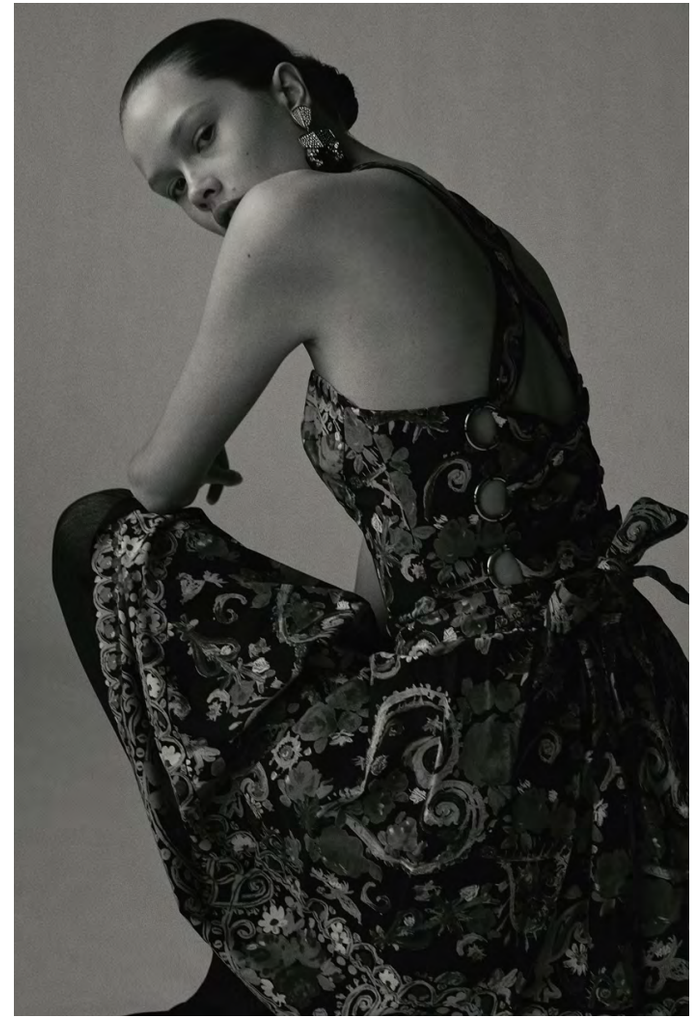
Elizabeth wears Christian Lacroix vintage jacket from Found and Vision; vintage denim skirt from Cenci Vintage London; 1980s Christian Lacroix gem set earrings and 1980s Christian Lacroix gold time earrings, both from Circa Vintage London; Christian Lacroix metal-tone and pâte de verre glass cross necklace from Very Vintage.

Sasha wears Christian Lacroix hand-painted silk organza swing dress
from haute couture collection 42, Spring 2008, from TLP Consulting and private collection.

Sasha wears Christian Lacroix 1980s purple skirt suit with embellished buttons from from House of Liza;
1980s Christian Lacroix gold-plated heart earrings from Chelsea Vintage Couture;
1980s Christian Lacroix gold pendant necklace from the Hirst Collection; BB suede black heels by Manolo Blahnik.



Tessa wears Christian Lacroix wool-knit sweater with byzantine gold embroidery,
haute couture, Spring/Summer 1992, from the Covert Archives;
1980s Christian Lacroix couture baroque-style earrings from DSF Antique Jewelry;
tights by Marc Jacobs; camel mock boots by Marc Jacobs.



Tessa wears 1980s Christian Lacroix floral dress from Rewind Vintage Affairs;
Christian Lacroix vintage crystal and resin colour vibe statement earrings from Jennifer Gibson Jewelry;
black ribbed tights by Marc Jacobs.

Lily wears Christian Lacroix nude fox fur wrap,
haute couture collection 33, Autumn/Winter 2003 from TLP Consulting and private collection;
camel mock boots by Marc Jacobs.

Make-up artist: Morgane Martini @ The Wall Group. Hair styling: Esther Langham @ Art + Commerce. Manicurist: Momo @ See Management. Production: Jemma Hinkly @ Artist Commissions, Victoria Pugh @ Lalaland, Mary-Clancey Pace @ Hen's Tooth Productions. Lighting designer: David Diesing. Casting: Establishment NY. Coordinator: Nicole Tondre. Digital tech: Jonathan Nesteruk. Director of Photograpy: Steven Rico. Photography assistance: Will Englehardt. Styling assistants: Oliver Volquardsen, Marie Choi, Kristen Mom, Megan Soria. Make-up assistants: Madison Personette, Mio Okano. Hair assistants: Gabe Jenkins, Abbi Coulter, Sergio Estrada. PAs: Emily May, Alana Amram, Christopher Harvey, Max Jaffe. Vintage couture consultancy by Timothy Pope, assisted by Anita Sumargono at TLP Consulting.

Models: Chen Yuan and Meghan Collison @ New York Model Management, Christina Kruse @ The Lions, Sasha Knysh @ Muse, Gabrielle Zimmerman @ Modelogic, Lily Nova, Naomi Chin Wing, Elizabeth Ayodele @ IMG, Tehya @ JAG, Ugbad Abdi @ Next, Remington Williams, Rose Daniels, Tessa Jean @ DNA.

Lily wears Christian Lacroix red and purple hand-painted silk taffeta ball gown with bouillon skirt and corset top,
haute couture collection 38, Spring 2006, from TLP Consulting and private collection.

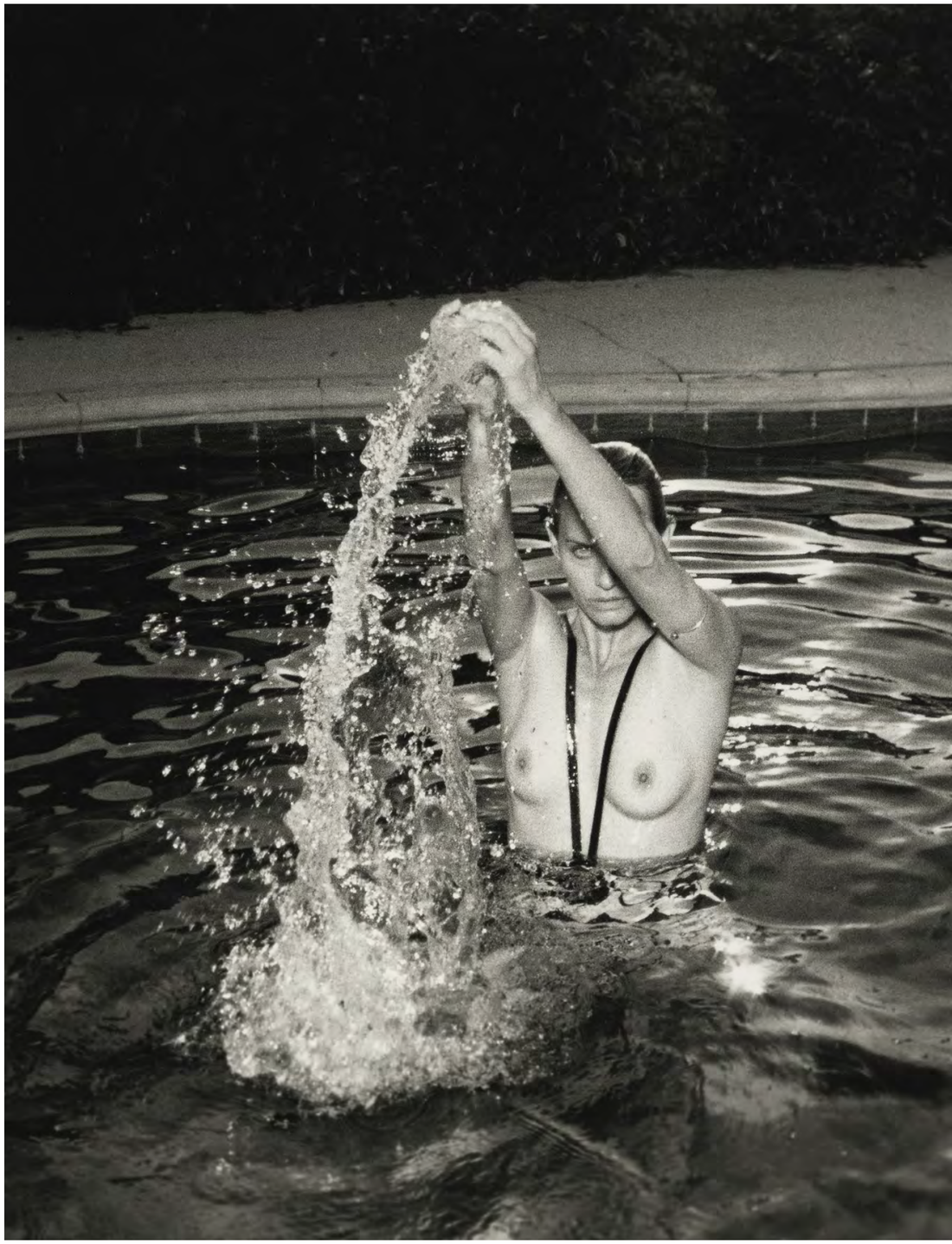
Special thanks to Timothy Pope at TLP Consulting

BALENCIAGA

‘Think of it as the birth of modern fashion.’

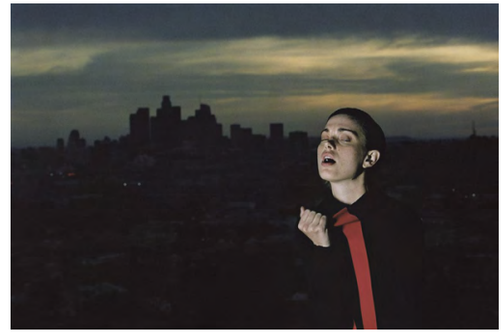
The life and times of serial avant-gardist Rudi Gernreich.

By Tim Blanks
Photographs by Robi Rodriguez
Styling by Karen Langley



Previous page: Amber wears Moon jacquard monokini.
This page: Sara wears classic monokini; Amber wears vintage Rudi Gernreich bathing suit.
Opposite page: Sara wears Balaclava one-piece.

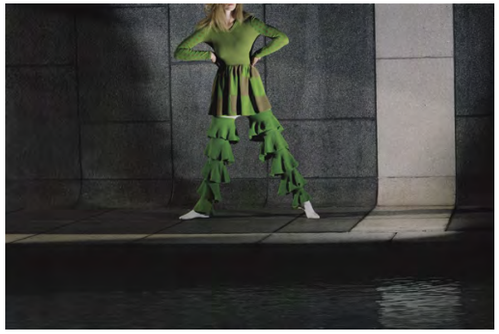
Amber wears Moon jacquard monokini.



Previous page: Sara wears Thong one-piece. Amber wears vintage Rudi Gernreich dress and leg warmers.
This page: Sara wears bodysuit; Balaclava one-piece. Terra wears LS Stripe turtleneck.

Previous page: Amber wears vintage Rudi Gernreich top and leg warmers.
This page: Amber wears Zig-Zag jacquard pants and vintage Rudi Gernreich top.
Opposite page: Sara wears Lisa monokini.

Talent: Amber Valletta @ IMG, Suvi Koponen @ Viva, Sara Evelina and Terra Wallace @ Akrav Agency, Joshua Sorrentino @ Two Management. Hair stylist: Teddy Charles @ The Wall Group, Ramona Eschbach @ Total. Make-up artist: Holly Silius, John McKay @ Frank Reps. Production: Western Promises. Photography assistant: Justin Brooks. Styling assistant: Cody Allen. Hair assistant: Virginia Pineda. Make-up assistant: Ciara Maccaro. Production assistants: Matisse Gaillard, Dared Granoth. Special thanks: Matthias Kind. Vintage Rudi Gernreich collection: Audrey Moorehead.



Previous page: Amber wears Moon jacquard monokini.
This page: Suvi wears vintage Rudi Gernreich. Sara wears Balaclava one-piece; Terra wears LS Stripe turtleneck.
Suvi wears Multi-triangle balaclava dress. Joshua wears men's Rudi Gernreich one-piece thong;
both Suvi and Terra wear Thong bikini bottom and solid bandeau.

Amber wears Moon jacquard monokini.

There was a time when Rudi Gernreich was the most famous designer in the world. When he launched the monokini, his topless bathing suit, in 1964, even the Vatican weighed in with an opinion. 'An enemy of the church,' railed Pope Paul VI. But that particular *cause célèbre* wasn't the only one over a three-decade career in which Gernreich literally reshaped women's fashion with his elevation of knitwear, transformation of swimwear, and, more than anything, invention of the 'no-bra' bra, without which it would be hard to imagine contemporary womenswear. Then there were minis and cut-outs and thongs and pre-Calvin briefs and boxers for women, a whole repertoire of liberated body-consciousness years and years before it occurred to anyone else. Rudi could even lay claim to the first fashion video, when his clothes were the focus of *Basic Black*, a seven-minute short created with his iconic muse, actress Peggy Moffitt, and her photographer husband William Claxton in 1967.

Gernreich wasn't a prophet without honour. Awards came often in the 1950s and 1960s. The monokini was tucked away in a 1965 time capsule between the Bible and the Pill, definitive of its era. In 1967, Gernreich made the cover of *Time*, one of just a handful of designers to receive that accolade in the magazine's 96-year history (others include Schiaparelli, Dior and Armani). The following year, he took a sabbatical, however, saying he was over fashion. For its January 1, 1970 issue, *Life* asked Gernreich to contribute his vision of fashion in the year 2000. He offered drawings of a man and woman stripped to barest, genderless essentials. 'I see unisex as a total statement about the equality of men and women,' he declared. 'Their different sexual natures no longer need the social support of differences of dress. Unisex reveals nature, our common humanity. It doesn't hide or confuse it.' Gernreich was invited to realize his vision at Expo '70 in Japan. His models, shaved of every strand of hair on their bodies, were dressed identically in tunics and leggings from past collections. He wanted to make the point that the 'newness' of the clothes was irrelevant: 'Who puts them on makes them what they are.' And, equally, who takes them off – the models stripped naked.

After this 'anti-fashion' statement, Gernreich dabbled throughout the 1970s: designing furniture, homewares, costumes for his friend Bella Lewitzky's ballet company, conceptualizing the thong as a response to California banning nudity on beaches, even making soups for his friend Wolfgang Puck's restaurant. Maybe this resumé created a dilettanté-ish stratum between Gernreich's radical past and his place in posterity. For whatever reason, by the time he died of lung cancer in April 1985, he had already been consigned to another era.

We can waste time by reasoning why, or we can diligently apply ourselves to some reputation recuperation. Gernreich is ready for a new prime time. I heard a delicious rumour that Nicolas Winding Refn wants to film his life story. Well, who wouldn't? Born in 1922 into a Jewish family in Vienna, Gernreich was exposed to fashion early on through his aunt's dress shop. He was 12 when she took him to Paris, where he went to a Balenciaga couture show. That obviously lingered in his psyche, almost as much as the influence of the Wiener Werkstätte, all around him in Vienna. When the Nazis invaded Austria in 1938,[1] Gernreich and his mother fled to the United States (his father had committed suicide when Rudi was eight) and settled in a Los Angeles community of Viennese exiles. He was an art student, until he became captivated by dance, joining the Lester Horton Dance Troupe,[2] which was a hotbed of left-wing radicalism. That gelled with Gernreich's own outsider political and artistic sensibilities. Through Horton, Gernreich met Harry Hay, and, in 1950, the pair founded the Mattachine Society,[3] one of the earliest LGBT organizations in North America.

'Rudi spoke of his childhood in Vienna, of being turned on by the glimpses of flesh of women's thighs between their stockings and their garters.'

'You are what you decide you want to be,' Gernreich said in 1970. It might be that his activism – his commitment to equality, diversity, sexual expression and LGBT rights, made manifest in his bequest to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)[4] – is one way to highlight his relevance. Another is his deep-rooted engagement with the arts community in Los Angeles, which embraced him. There is a famous photograph of the city's art elite posed on the steps of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1968; Rudi is the only fashion designer. Try to imagine something similar happening at the same time on the steps of the Metropolitan Museum in New York.

Los Angeles was both a blessing and a curse for Gernreich. The physical environment was ideal for his open-minded, body-conscious aesthetic, but the city was also marginal in the fashion and, slightly less so, the art world. That may have hindered his place in posterity, but what's more enlightening is to trace Gernreich's influence, from his groundbreaking knitwear in the 1950s onwards. His disciples are an interesting group. Yves Saint Laurent was a fan (Rudi pioneered the sheer looks and androgyny that gilded YSL with scandal). I would hazard that André Courrèges was, too. Tom Ford's career-defining pieces at Gucci owe a debt to Gernreich's cut-outs. Silk jersey clasped by sculpted metal neckpieces and cuffs? More echoes of Rudi. Stephen Sprouse and Norma Kamali were clearly acolytes. The DNA of a very particular, strong line in American fashion derives from Gernreich.

After all, there was, is and will be no one like him.

Barbara Bain,[5] actress: When I met Rudi in 1951, it was one of the sweetest meetings in the universe between two people. We were in the outer office waiting for Diana Vreeland at *Harper's Bazaar*. I was modelling to pay for my dancing classes with Martha Graham.[6] My agency had sent me to meet Vreeland, and I was terrorized by the whole idea. I walked in, and there was this pretty boy with a rail of clothes. Rudi had come in from Los Angeles, and LA designers were really special in New York. He said to me in a very shaky voice, 'Would you like to see my things?' I fell in love with what was hanging on the rack. Knitted fabrics, in bold colours, with a very clean line. They looked very much like they had come out of the modern dance world. I said, 'This is great, you are going to do so well.' And he hugged me and said, 'You are divine and *you* are going to do well!'

So, there we were, these two skinny kids cheering each other up. So we always had that moment together, on the cusp of any kind of big career. And when Rudi came to New York with his line every year, he would call me and I would be in the show for him.

Billy Al Bengston,[7] artist: We would have met around 1958 or 1960, through Pat Faure.[8] She was probably the most sophisticated person in California at that time; she was a blender. She brought me to Rudi. He was an unusual cat, a handsome little fella when most of the designers weren't very attractive. He dressed in black, which was unusual for California at that time. Very individual, sort of like a European existentialist. If you talked about Rudi, people would say, 'Oh, the guy who wears all black.' I just thought, who would wear those uncomfortable clothes in California? It was definitely not Californian. Black. Too fucking hot. And you know, we weren't all nocturnal, a lot of things happened during the day. Wearing black during the day, unless you're a Bedouin, doesn't cut it. And he had horrendous dandruff. I once mentioned it to him: 'Rudi, you got to stop wearing black or get rid of your dandruff.' He was never a glamorous figure to me; he was a little mouse as far as I was concerned. He never left the house without his wig on.

'He dressed in black, like a European existentialist, not at all Californian. If you talked about Rudi, people would say, "Oh, the guy who wears black."'

German entrepreneur Matthias Kind is currently overseeing the revival of the Rudi Gernreich brand and clothing line. Meanwhile the Skirball Cultural Centre in Los Angeles is showing "Fearless Fashion: Rudi Gernreich" until September. I've heard there is also a major exhibition planned for what would have been Rudi's 100th birthday in 2022 at FIT in New York. It would be wonderful to think that the then V&A curator James Laver was being unduly downbeat when he declared in 1964 that it would take 'a century and a half' for Gernreich's monokini to be considered beautiful. Though, on second thoughts, being able to conceive of his relevance 150 years later could actually be construed as a major compliment to his enduring modernity.

Tim Blanks: Did you ever see him without his wig?
Billy Al Bengston: Yeah, quite by accident.
Tim: What he did look like without it?
Billy: He looked like Rudi without his wig.

Layne Nielson, Rudi Gernreich's accessories designer: Rudi was small, only 5'6". Some people have described him as elfin but I wouldn't go that far. He had this captivating personality that could win over everybody, an innate Viennese good humour. I was from Utah and had never met anyone from Europe until I went to Los Angeles. He was an exotic and sophisticated European. He always dressed completely differently from anybody else, starting from when he was a child, and

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1. Rudi Gernreich in front of his studio on Santa Monica Boulevard, Los Angeles, 1977.
2. Rudi Gernreich with Léon Bing and Peggy Moffitt on the cover of *Time*, December 1, 1967 issue.

Photograph: Barbra Walz.

Original photographs: Dan Esgro; Still-life photography: Anthony Cabaero.

3.

3. Costumes designed by Rudi Gernreich for the Bella Lewitzky ballet, *Inscape*, 1978.

his mother just let him dress in whatever he wanted. One of his cousins told me that he always dressed up in bizarre outfits, unlike any other child in Vienna. Rudi had his own idea about how he wanted to present himself; I guess he would look in the mirror and find it appealing. There are photographs of him about the time when I met him in 1958 and he was wearing conventional suits, so he looked like he would fit in with everyone else. But when you saw him in person in that outfit, he would look completely different because of his short stature and the innate grace of the way he moved. Some people have said it was a dancer's grace, but he was never a very good dancer. He was just very light on his feet. There was nothing effeminate about him, though, absolutely nothing like that.

Billy Al Bengston: I was the only one who knew Warhol. He was a nice creep. I liked him a lot. But we had very little in common. Name-fucker – I think that was a term that was popular then. But you got to realize at that time, we would just go to the coffee shop down from the Ferus Gallery[11] and drink coffee and that would be about it. Rudi wasn't part of that. He was a hardworking son of a gun. He didn't care about any of that. I would say he was about as devoted as you could get to his profession. Yet light-hearted, too.

Irving Blum: I thought Rudi was enormously sensitive and bright. He wasn't very forthcoming, but when he was, it was absolutely worth listening. He had an innate understanding of what it was I was up to. He responded to the modernity; to his eye, it was extremely fresh. I really appreciated that and became very fond of him. Rudi didn't really buy art from me, maybe a drawing or two. I remember he liked John Altoon[12] a lot. I was the first person to show Warhol, so Andy came out a few times. He came especially for the Duchamp show at the Pasadena Art Museum in 1963 and Rudi was there. So they could have met there or at the gallery. I didn't see Rudi that often. Generally, when he came, it was with Peggy, who was fabulous. I adored her and I adored her husband, Bill. And Rudi kind of came in their wake. I knew what he was doing in fashion was extremely radical; I loved it. Jimmy Galanos[13] used to come around as well. He was interested in what I was doing, but not in the same way Rudi was. He was completely fascinated by art activity and I always thought he had a radical voice. Galanos and I never talked about Rudi, but I'm sure he was aware of him. Everyone was.

Elizabeth Saltzman,[14] fashion editor: My mother always wore Rudi. She was wearing him in the 1950s. She was part of that whole crew. Before I was born, she was an editor at *Glamour*, and a stylist. Rudi to me was equal to the coolness of my mom. It was just normal life for us, except my mom was different from every other mother ever. She didn't make my clothes, or bake cookies, or come dressed in Lily Pulitzer.[15] My mother had short hair, and wore knitted swimwear at the beach in really cool yellows and reds, and turtleneck swimsuits and cut-outs. And all that was Rudi. We are a minimalist family; we keep nothing, but she still has two of those bathing suits tucked in her bathing-suit drawer.

'When the monokini hit in 1964, Rudi became an international sensation overnight. It was all media chaos, which is exactly what he wanted.'

Billy Al Bengston: I liked Rudi personally. He was a goofy little guy. He was as tight as a tick but he was generous compared to everyone else. I was about as crapped-out broke as you could get and I did a couple of jobs for him. He had some money. You had to have money to run in his crowd. I think if they had parties, Peggy Moffitt took over. Moffitt was a great lip; she was a magnificent social person.

Irving Blum,[9] gallerist: I became very friendly with Bill and Peggy Claxton[10] in the late 1950s, early 1960s, and she brought Rudi into the gallery. He was really excited about a lot of the people I was showing: Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Frank Stella, and I remember that he was particularly taken with Ellsworth Kelly.

Layne Nielson: The word Californian always seemed to be attached to his name, because the Californian lifestyle was so different to anyplace else in the country; it allowed a more casual kind of dressing. It was a style that was recognized in New York as something completely different. Back then, *Vogue* would run entire issues called 'Californian Style'. Rudi was influenced by Claire McCardell[16] because he admired her all-American attitude. She paid no attention to what was coming out of Paris, which every other designer in the United States was copying. Norman Norell,[17] for example, said he didn't do anything until he saw what Paris was doing. But Claire McCardell struck out on her own. I think her clothes were gaudy beyond belief, so in that respect they were the exact antithesis of Rudi's because his were always very dramatic. He was influenced by the Wiener Werkstätte.[18] Surprisingly, he also said he admired Balenciaga, but look at Balenciaga at his best, when he was cutting some of those big cape coats that apparently have no seams, and you can see why. Rudi understood the simplicity.

Excerpt from a phone conversation between Michèle Lamy, Rick Owens and Tim Blanks

Tim Blanks: Rick, as a designer from California, do you consider Rudi a Californian designer?
Rick Owens: Was he Californian, really, or was there a Viennese influence?
Tim: Well, he was inspired by the Wiener Werkstätte, for sure, but he always called himself a Californian designer.
Rick: He was happy to say that because California was exotic to him, the way Europeans are exotic to us. I think it is kind of that whole Europe-meets-California thing. That has always been my fascination. I think it has something to do with his aesthetic too, but in reverse. My whole shtick is that I'm a Californian working in Europe, while he was an Old World European working in California.

Layne Nielson: I met Rudi in 1958. I had just moved to Los Angeles from Utah where I grew up. I was fleeing home and a friend offered me a place to sleep and he got me a job at the UCLA library, printing numbers on the spines of books. It was mostly art students, but one of the people sitting next to me was not an art student, but a very sophisticated European dressed in a suit. It turned out he was Rudi's cousin, Paul. One day he mentioned to me that he had a cousin who was a very famous designer, and wheels started to turn in my head. I didn't know what I was going to do in Los Angeles; I certainly hadn't thought about the clothing industry. I thought I was going to be a musician or something like that. So, I said to Paul, do you think I could meet your cousin? A few days later, Paul said to me, Rudi would be happy to meet you. I cannot imagine what Paul had said to Rudi. He was already very famous at that point, and here I am, a nobody from the sticks and he is agreeing to meet with me. So, I quickly turned out some sketches overnight and I go to meet him. His workroom was in Beverly Hills and he took me for lunch at Frascati, one of the trendiest European-style restaurants in town. It wasn't very far from the Walter Bass[19] workrooms. I showed him the sketches and he said, 'If you are interested in learning to make hats, I will use them in my collection.' A kid from Utah learning to make hats? It was just too like a fantasy land or something. But he said he had a friend who could teach me the basics, and that's how it started. I made hats for his shows, little pillbox hats, things like that on a freelance basis, until I went into the army in 1961. When I got out of the army in 1963, I contacted Rudi who said, 'Come back and work with me', so I went to Los Angeles and started full-time in April 1964.

The monokini had just broken on the news. The studio, everything around him, was a hive of attention and activity and media chaos. There he was, already a famous designer in the United States and then overnight, he became an international sensation. That was what Rudi wanted. And as he got more famous, his ego swelled, which just emphasized what was already part of his character: he always thought he was right about everything.

Léon Bing, muse and model: I came just after Peggy had gone to London to be an actress. I guess you could call me a muse. I remained so even when Peggy came back. Then Rudi had two muses. We were both on the cover of *Time*.[20] As a muse, all I had to do was show up and bring my cheekbones. Some clothes were being made on me; some were made on Peggy. It must have been 1965 when Rudi and I first met. I was doing that big show at the Met they had every year, where every swell in town showed up in their finest and the main floor was emptied and that's where about seven models each wore something from the museum archive. Another model came up to me and said to me that Rudi Gernreich wanted someone who looked like a spy. I did fit that bill – I had a black Louise Brooks bob. So I went to see him in his hotel suite, at the St. Regis I believe it was. He didn't have a showroom; he rented hotel suites. I'd heard his name, though I didn't know his clothes terribly well. I tried the first dress and I thought, 'Oh my God, these are perfect.' I knew from that moment that Rudi was a revolutionary, and I

'Rudi wasn't particularly political, but if he thought he was going to be at the forefront, he'd do something daring and radical.'

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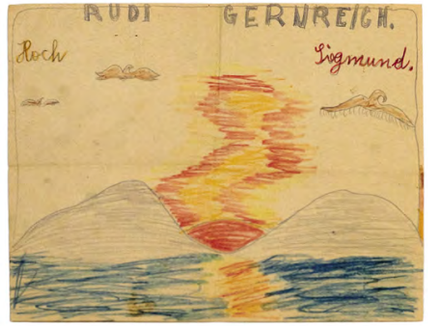

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4. Rudi Gernreich as a young dancer in the early 1940s.
Photograph by William Ricco.
5. Rudi Gernreich's childhood drawings, c.1930.

Original photograph: William Ricco; Still-life photography: Anthony Cabaero.

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6. A photo of the Los Angeles artistic community in front of LACMA, published in *Los Angeles* magazine, featuring Rudi Gernreich (centre, leaning back on steps, wearing signature black); Billy Al Bengston (standing far left in front of large painting); Larry Bell (standing behind Rudi); and Ed Ruscha (sitting in front of *SPAM* canvas), 1968.
7. Peggy Moffitt wearing a black-and-white typeface dress and matching tights with silk signature scarf, 1968.
Photograph by William Claxton/Courtesy Demont Photo Management.

knew about clothes early on, because my mother had all her clothes made by Adrian.[21] Rudi's dresses had built-in pockets, because he very much wanted the women who wore them to feel comfortable. I didn't wear a bra and he loved that. He made the 'no-bra' bra to make it look as though you weren't wearing one. After that we were together as artist and model forever after. Edie Sedgwick and Andy Warhol came to one of our first shows together. Warhol was very, very strange-looking and she was trying to look like him with the hair colouring. They were an odd duo.

Marylou Luther, journalist: When I first met Rudi, he let me mispronounce his name as gern-RIKE. He never once corrected me. It wasn't until I called his office one day and his secretary Fumi answered, 'Mr. GERN-rick's office' that I realized my mistake.

Layne Nielson: In the early years when Rudi was in Los Angeles he would talk to friends about his past, but some of it he made up. He was always wanting to make an impression somewhere, so he exaggerated some things about his experiences under the Nazis, for example. Yes, it was horrendous, but he liked to embellish, to make a good story. It was just part of his showmanship, I think. Other than that, I don't know that he talked to anybody about what really went on in his life. He was more interested in the here and now. The right now and his vision of the future, and moving on.

Léon Bing: He and I got each other's humour, a very dry, rather English kind of humour. He could make me pee with laughter. His husband, Dr. Oreste Pucciani,[22] was the chairman of the French department at UCLA. He knew absolutely nothing about fashion and didn't care. Oreste was very stern-looking, like a Roman emperor, but fortunately he liked me, and it was my great delight to make him giggle. Rudi talked a lot about his childhood with me, his adolescence in Vienna. He talked about being turned on by the leather chaps that working men wore, by the glimpses of the white flesh of women's thighs between their black stockings and their garters, both sensual and sexual. I remember him designing an outfit in which long woollen stockings went right to mid-thigh and then a good two inches of flesh before the hem of the skirt. No one was doing anything like he did. I remember a long dark blue dress I wore for evening, a very thin wool skirt, a cap-sleeved top in one layer of chiffon so sheer you could see not only the outline of the breast but the nipples, everything. It was beautiful. The closest comparison I can make is Balanchine, the great choreographer who adored women – Rudi loved women.

Marylou Luther: Rudi never discussed his sexuality with me, but I think it was one of many influences on his design. While he never outed himself, he was one of the founders of the Mattachine Society, a forerunner of the gay movement. From 1950 to 1952, he and Harry Hay, who founded the movement, were lovers. Gernreich resigned in 1953, along with other founders, over an ideological schism. That the man who tore up so many closets with his revolutionary clothes never came out of the closet himself says a lot about Gernreich and his times. Peggy Moffitt, his model-muse, explained it this way: 'I don't think it ever occurred to him to come out of the closet because he felt his sexuality was understood and that there was no way to hide it.' Gernreich's partner of 31 years, Oreste Pucciani, told me that Rudi told him that he didn't reveal his sexuality 'because it would be bad for business'.

Layne Nielson: Rudi was very, very private. He had never lived away from his mother until he moved in with Oreste in 1956, I think. They kept a very low profile. All of this business about Rudi being active in some kind of a gay-rights movement is absolutely false. It is true that he was one of the two co-founders of the Mattachine Society, but it wasn't like a planned event. Harry Hay was such a rabble rouser and what attracted Rudi to Harry was his socialist and communist leanings, not the gay rights. And one night, Harry said he had an idea about doing all these things for gay rights and Rudi simply said, 'Well I am with you 100%.' And if Rudi had not said that, there would have been no Mattachine Society. He didn't fund it; he was just there. It was only when Stuart Timmons[23] resurrected Harry Hay that this whole false notion got built way out of proportion. I say again that it is absolutely true that Rudi and Harry Hay were the two founders of the Mattachine Society, but that is about all you can say.

'That the man who tore up so many closets with his revolutionary clothes never came out of the closet himself says a lot about Gernreich and his times.'

Tim Blanks: There was a story I heard that Rudi paid the bail of the people arrested during the Stonewall riots[24] in 1969, which, if true, was quite an incredible political gesture at that time.

Layne: He may have. Rudi always wanted to be out in front of something. He didn't have a terribly active political mind, but if he thought he was going to be out in the forefront, and do something daring… His whole family were socialists. So that was just part of his DNA.

Tim: Do you think that made life difficult for him in any way in America?

Layne: I don't think he would have let anything make life difficult for him, though his involvement with the communist stuff with Harry Hay did bring him very close to danger. It got him right up close to the House Un-American Activities Committee.[25] That was Harry Hay's big drum to beat, as it was with Bella Lewitzky[26] and Lester Horton. That is when Rudi was dancing with Horton, and that whole group came under scrutiny. They certainly knew about Rudi, but he was not entangled with it, let me put it that way.

Irving Blum: The artists, by and large, had a real regard for what Rudi was doing, and he had every kind of entrée as a consequence. So when Peggy would take him to an artist's studio, they were always extremely respectful and open to him. I think they saw an extraordinary creativity. Whether he saw himself as an artist is an interesting question. That subject never came up. I always thought of him really as both designer and artist.

Larry Bell,[27] artist and sculptor: I knew Rudi from the art scene at the Ferus Gallery where I hung around. Irving Blum or Walter Hopps introduced us. I had no other contacts with the fashion world, but I knew a lot of stylish people who dressed great. Billy Al Bengston and I used to haunt the thrift shops looking for nice suits and ties. Rudi invited me and Billy to his workshop; it was the first time I had been in such a studio. I was impressed with the number of people who were around his scene. He was a possible collector and that in itself was unusual. There were a lot of people in the scene but not very many that collected our works. He was one of the first people to buy a sculpture of mine. He never talked about his past with me. We talked about colours and textures and surfaces. I thought he was very cool and he was very soft spoken and funny. In general, the humour was totally silly. He was good at it and serious with his work, just like the other artists who were close to me. I recognized a kindred spirit. Rudi had a very quiet sense of being part of the underground. I don't remember what I thought of the topless bathing suit in 1964, but I was astounded when I went to a showing at someone's house and all the models were naked and had shaved their bodies completely.

Rudi Gernreich, press release for the Autumn 1968 collection, released in May 1968: The body is a legitimate dimension of human reality and can be used for a lot of things besides sex. Slowly, the liberation of the body will cure our society of its sex hang-up. Today our notions of masculine and feminine are being challenged as never before, the basic masculine-feminine appeal is in people, not in clothes. When a garment becomes sufficiently basic, it can be worn unisexually.

Issey Miyake, designer: Rudi had a very definite idea about clothing and how it extended to the human body. He clothed men and women in the same clothing; he was against clothing that defined one by one's sex. Some call him a modernist – I am not sure. I can only say that he was a designer who was always thinking of new ways to express ideas about the human body using clothing. Rudi acted quickly on what came to his mind. I believe it is very important for a creator to have such a pure attitude.

Ed Ruscha, artist: I met Rudi in the late 1960s through Léon Bing,[28] a model for many of his daringly original fashion statements. I would occasionally spot him driving his white Bentley (very slowly) to his shop on Santa Monica Boulevard near La Cienega. He would wear his own distinctly self-designed clothing. He could be stately and aloof, but at the same time remain a rather ordinary citizen. I cast him in a short movie I did with Larry Bell. Rudi played a roguish flophouse doorman who sneers and says, ''At'll be two dollars.' Here was an elegant man in real life playing a lowdown character who cleans his dirty fingernails with a screwdriver.

Léon Bing: I grew up with art and loved it. I knew most of the young emerging

'Rudi had a very definite idea about clothing and how it extended to the human body. He was against clothing that defined people by their sex.'

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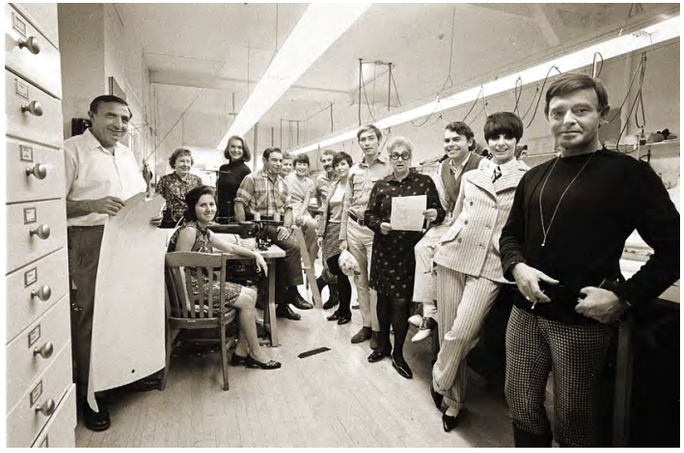

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8. Rudi Gernreich and Peggy Moffitt being photographed by Jeanloup Sieff, Paris, 1965.
Photograph by William Claxton/Courtesy Demont Photo Management.
9. Rudi Gernreich and his design team in the studio on Santa Monica Boulevard, Los Angeles, 1967. Photograph by Julian Wasser.

Still-life photography: Anthony Cabacro.

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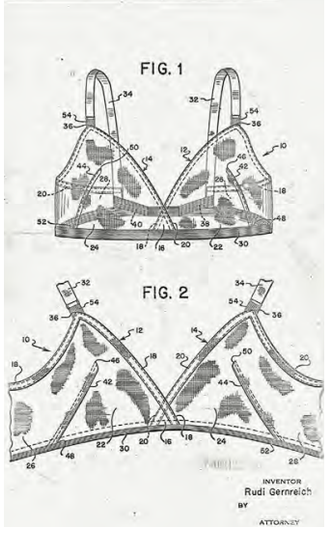
10. Rudi Gernreich sketches, 1960s.



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11. The Rudi Gernreich 'no-bra' bra in the official patent application registered with the United States Patent Office, 1967.
12. Advertisement for the Rudi Gernreich 'no-bra' bra by Exquisite Form in *Harper's Baazar*, 1965.
13. The Unisex Project Collection fashion show, 1970.

Original photograph by Larry Bessel; Still-life photography: Anthony Cabaero.
©Bettmann Collection/Getty Images.

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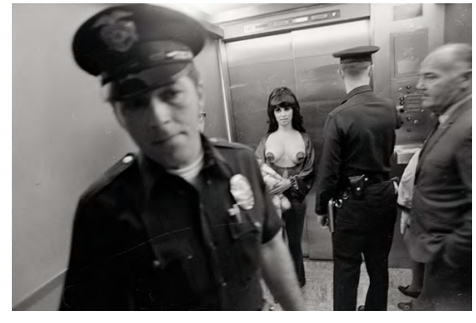

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14. Renèe Holt and Tom Broome wearing matching Rudi Gernreich swimwear from the Unisex Project Collection, 1970.
15. The Unisex Project Collection worn by Renée Holt and Tom Broome with Rudi Gernreich, Los Angeles, 1970. Photograph by Julian Wasser.
16. San Francisco-based dancer-actress Lola Raquel is arrested by police at Los Angeles International Airport for indecent exposure while wearing one of Rudi Gernreich's topless dresses, 1970.
17. Models wearing the Rudi Gernreich monokini after a rooftop fashion show at the Continental Hotel, Los Angeles, 1964.

artists like Ed Ruscha and Larry Bell and Ed Moses. And Irving Blum had his gallery. I met Ed [Ruscha] when we all posed for the cover of *Los Angeles* magazine on the steps of LACMA,[29] with every artist represented in the museum and, for some unknown reason, Rudi and me. I loved Ruscha's work; he was holding one of his larger paintings that was in the museum, and I thought he was even better-looking than his art. I said to Rudi, 'Go get him,' he said, 'I don't know him' and I said, 'That's never stopped you before.' So he did, and that's how I met Ed. And then Ed got a Guggenheim Fellowship and he ended up making a book and a movie with us all called *Premium*, as in the crackers. Rudi played a kind of bellboy in a flea-bag hotel with old dirty trousers and a dirty T-shirt. Ed poured salad all over me; I was picking parsley out of parts of my body for days after we shot it. It was a really fun, experimental time, almost anything went. *Almost* is the key word there.

Larry Bell: Ed Ruscha asked Rudi to play the part of a hotel-desk manager; his role was to act like a seedy guy in a seedy Hollywood hotel. He had to wear very funky clothes that seemed totally not Rudi. If I recall correctly, he was to chew gum rapidly while he talked briefly. I was always very comfortable around this famous man; he was easy to like. He enjoyed being around artists.

Layne Nielson: I wasn't that involved with the art scene then. Those people were another world for Rudi. He was the only clothing designer who was accepted by the arts community on that level, at least in Los Angeles. He also was the only one who was included in surveys of prominent cultural people in Los Angeles. *Life* ran a large newspaper ad titled, 'What does Los Angeles think about life?' and Rudi was the only designer included with all these other prominent figures. He always thought of himself as an artist. That sort of explains why he had no interest in learning how to put a dress together. He had no clue how to construct a garment. Even after all the years of working with Walter Bass, he still didn't know. If you look at his clothes, the good ones, they are like cookie-cutter cut-outs, there is practically no construction to them. They are a concept and the artist in him produced them. And other artists recognized that. I have a letter from Larry Bell that he wrote to Rudi and he said, 'It is nice to know that there are other people, such as you Rudi, doing what we are doing.' There were a few journalists in the fashion industry who also understood that. I think one of them wrote that one of his patterns looked like a Matisse when it was laid out.

Cameron Silver, fashion historian and philanthropist: For sure, Rudi was an artist. I had a client who was aware that I had curated a Gernreich exhibition at MOCA[30] several years ago, and she lived not far from where Harmon Knitwear[31] was based. They had had a huge fire and someone had salvaged some of the original Rudi Gernreich fabrics, which she then sent to me. These textiles were art pieces, so graphic looking. And the typography of the scarves, the placement and manipulation of letters that was so distinctive, in the same sense that Katherine Hamnett created an iconic typography on her graphic T-shirts. Rudi never wanted the letters to say anything though, which I thought was quite interesting.

Marylou Luther: His relationship with the media was iffy. Several major magazines and newspapers refused to show pictures of Moffitt wearing his topless bathing suit; others did not show photos of the two naked models he took to Expo '70 in Japan. For me, Gernreich was a gift. To have someone that newsworthy in your own backyard, to have Q&A breakfasts, lunches and dinners with him was a godsend. Did I maintain my journalistic objectivity? I think I did; I hope I did.

Layne Nielson: We didn't do many shows in LA because the market was smaller, there were fewer retail stores, and the press was in New York. And Rudi was interested in the press. That is why we would haul all this stuff to New York, three or four times a year. We showed there right up until the end of 1968 when he went out of business. The people he would show for were, for the most part, great fans. So were the big press people, from the *New York Times*, the *Herald Tribune*, *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*. Then there were the other ladies coming from the provinces, Minneapolis or Detroit, who were there for the excitement of fashion week. And they would write that there was nothing like a Rudi Gernreich show because you never knew what you were going to see. There was always something they thought was outrageous. Then there were others who called him a kook.

'He had no clue how to construct a garment. His clothes were like cookie-cutter cut-outs. But they were a concept, and the artist in him produced them.'

Barbara Bain: Rudi's clothes were so strong and clean and different. They moved, they weren't static at a time when everything else was fairly stiff. It was straight-line dresses and tight jackets. At the time I was modelling with Charles James,[32] who was an extraordinary designer; he was called the Balenciaga of America. He would build designs that could stand up by themselves. But he wasn't nice. I would stand there and get stuck with pins. All to pay for my dance classes!

Layne Nielson: His clothes would work on a 17-year-old and an 80-year-old. My aunt was in her 80s when she died and she had worn Rudi's knit dresses every single day, and they had looked absolutely right. They were cut so simply that anyone could get in them and they were flattering. There was a simplicity to Rudi's clothes. You might see a simply cut dress in one of his shows that had a very flamboyant pattern and then all these accessories to dramatize the whole thing to make it newsworthy, but you take that same dress and cut it in navy wool tweed and anybody could wear it and they did. Those were the clothes that people were coming for. You should not get the idea women were wearing these far out very dramatic pieces. [Broadway legend] Carol Channing would, because she had that kind of personality. She was one of the most professional people I had ever worked with in that kind of environment, where all she is doing is getting in and out of clothes. There was no ego involved with her whatsoever. When she walked into a room, that was it, the whole place was on fire. But no ego. It was really interesting. I helped Barbra Streisand one evening, 1966, 1967, when she came in to buy some personal wardrobe. She went through the collection and she put together a group of clothes that was completely interchangeable. Most fashionista people are not terribly bright in my opinion, but I thought, 'My God, this woman has really got a brain.' Sharon Tate and her sister, who was also absolutely gorgeous, used to come in and buy. I would very often be the one who was assisting and writing up the order. But not all of the clientele would come into the showroom to buy clothes. [Indian politician and prime minister] Indira Gandhi bought directly from Rudi, while Jackie Kennedy was going to Saks.

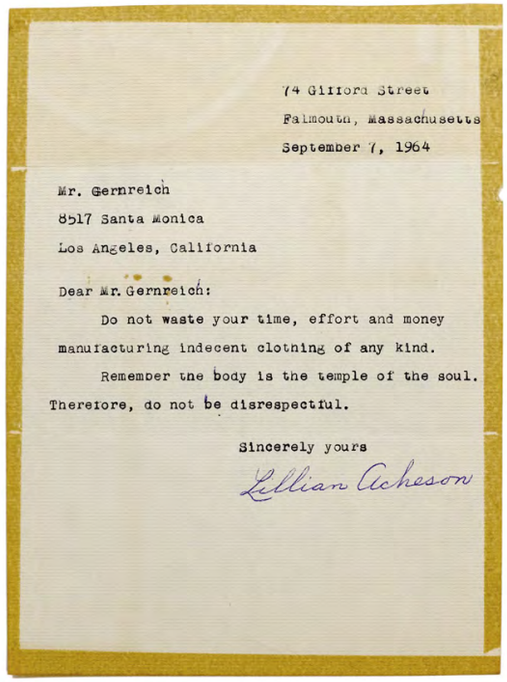
Elizabeth Saltzman: I wore it all the time when I became capable of wearing it. It wasn't about sensuality or being extreme, because I wasn't aware of what they were. It was about feeling different and cool, without trying. It was my norm, it was what you borrowed from your mother's closet. Rudi's clothes weren't something architectural in the sense of construction; they were clothes that didn't fight your body. They were retro, but in no way had they dated. I still don't think there is a date to them – they are classics.

Marylou Luther: Rudi was a sociologist, anthropologist, humanist, psychologist, psychiatrist, revolutionary, innovator, fortune teller, dancer, comfort seeker, artist, artisan, and on and on and on. And he liked to shock. Baring breasts and pubic hair, passing out guns at his show, shaving bodies and heads, dressing models as nuns – he called them the Sisters of the Immaculate Mascara – these were not acts of maintaining the status quo.

Barbara Bain: Rudi was an exceedingly intelligent man, and we had wonderful conversations whenever we met. It was just a comfortable exploration of the universe. It was good to be in each other's presence. He was an artist, he was a visionary, he was a philosopher, he was so clever with his view of anything. I never felt like that about anyone else in fashion. Charles James was an artist, too, but he was such a miserable person. Everyone felt that, it wasn't just me.

Léon Bing: He and I once went to San Francisco to do some television thing and I'm from the Bay Area so after, we went for dinner at Ernie's, which was the place at the time. I ordered tripe and I ate it with such relish that the captain gave me another helping. One weekend, Rudi called me up and said, 'You have to come for dinner.' And I was not sure, and he said, 'You have to!' Now, making tripe involves cooking it all day and throwing off the water and adding new water and it stinks like a charnel house while it's cooking. And when I got to the house, Rudi had spent the whole day making tripe. He knew I loved it and that's what he'd done for me. That was the kind of guy he was.

'Rudi liked to shock. Baring breasts and pubic hair, passing out guns at his show, dressing models as nuns – these were not acts of maintaining the status quo.'



74 Gifford Street
Falmouth, Massachusetts
September 7, 1964

Mr. Gernreich
8517 Santa Monica
Los Angeles, California

Dear Mr. Gernreich:

Do not waste your time, effort and money manufacturing indecent clothing of any kind.

Remember the body is the temple of the soul. Therefore, do not be disrespectful.

Sincerely yours
Lillian Acheson

18.

19.

18. Hate mail, 1964.
19. 'Help Stamp Out Rudi Gernreich' for a Palo Alto-based beauty school, newspaper advertisment, 1970.

Still-life photography: Anthony Cabacro.

Still-life photography: Anthony Cabacro.

20.

21.

22.

20. Rudi Gernreich pubikini sketches, 1985.
21. Rudi Gernreich at home with model Sue Jackson wearing the 'pubikini', photographed by Helmut Newton, 1985.
©The Helmut Newton Estate/Maconochie Photography.
22. Helmut Newton photograph of Jerry Hall and Lisa Taylor wearing Rudi Gernreich swimwear, Miami, Florida, published in American *Vogue*, 1975.
©The Helmut Newton Estate/Maconochie Photography.

Layne Nielson: Rudi was so entwined with California, that was part of his identity, but he spent a lot of time on the East Coast. All of our major shows were in New York. They were very small and it is hard to imagine anybody having a show that would make a nationwide impact in such a small and unpretentious space. I think Rudi's showroom was 530 Seventh Avenue. It was small, with folding chairs. There was no hoopla, no music. Rudi might have only 30 pieces, because he was a lazy designer and didn't produce many clothes, but even if it was not a huge collection, it was loaded with drama. The explosive way he would put colours together shocked everyone in New York in the 1950s. I did all the accessories from the head down; the shoes were Capezio.[33] Rudi found one style that he stuck with. It was called the Gondola, like a little French pump. We had the same shoes for every show. It was the perfect style for any Rudi Gernreich clothes because it only had a two-inch heel. You couldn't show Gernreich clothes with a spike heel. Occasionally when Rudi would go off on some wild creative bent, Capezio would make something special like boots, but always with a low heel. Rudi would stand right out in front of the dressing room and narrate from beginning to end. He was the star of the show. He had a very sophisticated, educated voice, though he didn't have an education. In his early years, he still had a German accent, but he wanted to become an American and how he managed to be able to speak such perfect American English, I don't know. Not a hint of an accent. And his grasp of the language was so thorough that he could make puns on any subject that were just spot on and hilarious.

Marylou Luther: Rudi's biggest mistake was not having a business partner to help sell his clothes to major retailers. And not showing in Paris. Without Paris as a stage, with all its publicity and attendant fashion power, he really never attained the fashion status he deserved.

Issey Miyake: Rudi Gernreich was the designer I admired the most, back then. But then there were many other designers who also admired Rudi – I believe Claude Montana did, too. I first met Rudi in New York and I remember visiting his studio in LA. Later, he came to Japan to attend the Osaka Expo '70 and attended one of my first fashion shows. He was intrigued by the school uniforms worn by Japanese kindergarten children and created a grown-up version. He had a wonderful sense of humour. He loved to create the reverse of ideas in that way. What I remember the most about Rudi is of course the photo of the two naked people, one male and one female, with shaved heads. The models were Renée Holt and Tom Broome. It was beautiful. It was way ahead of its time and the work of a pioneer. He was very courageous. Tom Broome later worked in my studio in Tokyo for a few years.

Barbara Bain: I went off to the UK in the 1970s to do this TV show called *Space: 1999*. The producers Gerry and Sylvia Anderson[34] came to meet with us and tell us what the series was going to be like, and Sylvia said, 'The only American designer I would be the least bit interested in designing the costumes for this would be Rudi Gernreich.' And I said, 'OK, well, I can call Rudi.' He was semi-retired by then and he had pulled back. He was thinking a lot. But he did those costumes for us with colour-coordinated sleeves, with the colour to indicate which department you were in on the space ship. When I met with Rudi and we spoke about it, he said quite a startling thing. I asked him, 'What do you think we'll be wearing in 1999?' 'Well, I am worried,' he answered. 'Armour.' That word never left my mind.

Michèle Lamy: I opened my store on Santa Monica Boulevard in 1979. His studio was not that far away and I became part of Rudi's afternoon promenade or something. He started coming to the store to hang out. He was always in black. He told me so many anecdotes. We talked about the world and why he had been abandoned by the press. I had the feeling that he was so disappointed with life at that time. He wanted to see something new, or what we were doing. He never came in with his own pieces, but he had a lot of his communications.

Rick Owens: You mean he was bringing his clippings? It was more important to prove his relevance to you rather than to talk about the clothes themselves?

Tim Blanks: Was he quite bitter?

Michèle: I wouldn't say bitter, but sad. Extremely sad at that time. He was not so attractive, where he had been so attractive before. He was hanging out on the boulevard to pick up some beautiful boy.

Tim: Really? But he had Oreste waiting at home.

Michèle: He was very nostalgic, wanting to be somebody else.

Rick: When he came in, were you like, 'Oh, a legend' or 'Oh, a loser'?

Michèle: Neither. There were a lot of characters, you know, who were extreme. It just seemed to be the normal thing that he was there. He was very supportive of what I was trying to do, but on the other hand, he did not think he had the energy to do something. That was the end for him. It was very sad. He didn't have too many friends, and he was more hanging out with us to look at what we were doing, because we were something new and fabulous in LA, and we were leaving him a bit behind. And he was very aware of that.

Rick: When you say 'we', you mean, your friends, your clients or your boyfriend? Who is 'we'?

Michèle: All of the above. You know in the store you had all these people there, so you had a little court.

Rick: He was just into hanging out with this little nest of cool kids?

Michèle: Yeah. And at the time, Maxfield was still on Santa Monica at the end, on the corner of Doheny. Tommy Perse[35] was selling Giorgio Armani there, and I had plastic shoes, like Oxfords, in all the colours. So Tommy was bringing people to hang out, too, but he was telling people in straight suits, 'You should wear summer shoes.' He was giving other people a hand at the time, a lot. So that was on the boulevard, at the beginning of Boystown. And my first day coming in from the airport, I thought this block looked good. Tony Duquette[36] was in one of the studios behind.

Rick: Tony Duquette and Rudi Gernreich on the same block!

Tim: Did you know Rudi left his entire estate to the ACLU?

Michèle: I remember him talking about that, and how he was going to leave everything to that society, yes.

Tim: That was quite a groundbreaking gesture. Was he sad because he'd been forgotten?

Rick: Forgotten? Or that he had been overlooked? That he had never gotten enough respect? I mean he got respect, but he felt like it was over.

Michèle: He felt it was over. He did not make money out of it. Rudi was thinking that William Claxton was against him and thought it should be about Peggy and not Rudi.

Rick: He and William Claxton clashed over who should have been responsible for his fame.

Tim: Did you like Peggy?

Michèle: Of course, I liked Peggy. I liked to see her, there was not so much to talk about. I didn't have a relation with Peggy and Rudi together. I understood that it was a competition with Peggy thinking she did those clothes, but they looked very fabulous on her. There was also Vidal Sassoon in the story because her look started with the cut from Vidal, and he was huge. They were all huge at that time.

Rick: Real fashion freaks like us love having an obscure kind of exotic designer as a private icon.

Michèle: That was not what he wanted. Out on the sidewalk.

Rick: It's not like he was broke. What was he expecting, to stay famous forever? He left behind beautiful images and a lot of them.

Michèle: But at that time, there was a Fiorucci opening, and the whole world was coming. I remember thinking that Fiorucci was something that Rudi should have been part of and was not. No one was taking care of him. I also think that what he did, the jersey, the monokini, his liberation of the body really became a sport thing. It was Jane Fonda who really continued it, but everything was made into spandex.

Rick: That's true. If he had gotten into active wear…

Michèle: That is what I thought, that should have been the follow up. But it came just 10 years too late for Rudi. The timing was wrong. Imagine *Baywatch* if they'd been wearing Rudi; it would have been incredible.

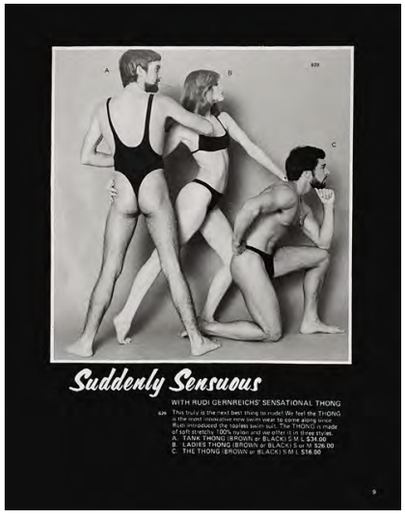
Cameron Silver: We have to realize the trifecta of Rudi, Peggy and Bill was quite magical and I don't think there has ever been a fashion collaboration that had the same kind of impact. She was very protective – rightfully so – of Rudi because it defined so much of herself in popular culture. It's so difficult for me to be objective and I am sure it's difficult for Peggy to be objective. They were so close; they were like a psychic brother and sister in the way that they worked.

Layne Nielson: Throughout the 1960s when Peggy was pretending to be the most famous person in the world, she was loathed by everyone. It pains me to

'Rudi's big mistake was not showing in Paris. Without Paris as a stage, with all its publicity and power, he never attained the status he deserved.'

'That whole activewear explosion came 10 years too late for Rudi. Imagine *Baywatch* if they'd been wearing Rudi; it would have been incredible.'

23.



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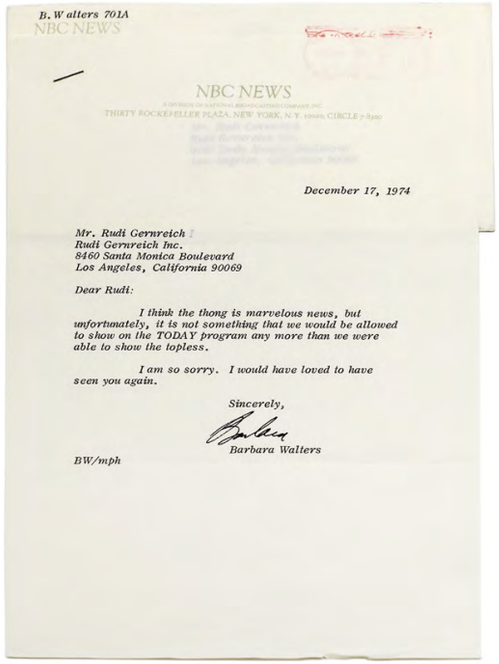


B. Walters 701A
NBC NEWS

NBC NEWS
A DIVISION OF NATIONAL BROADCASTING COMPANY, INC.
THIRTY ROCKEFELLER PLAZA, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10020, CIRCLE 7-8300

December 17, 1974

Mr. Rudi Gernreich
Rudi Gernreich Inc.
8460 Santa Monica Boulevard
Los Angeles, California 90069

Dear Rudi:

I think the thong is marvelous news, but unfortunately, it is not something that we would be allowed to show on the TODAY program any more than we were able to show the topless.

I am so sorry. I would have loved to have seen you again.

Sincerely,

Barbara Walters

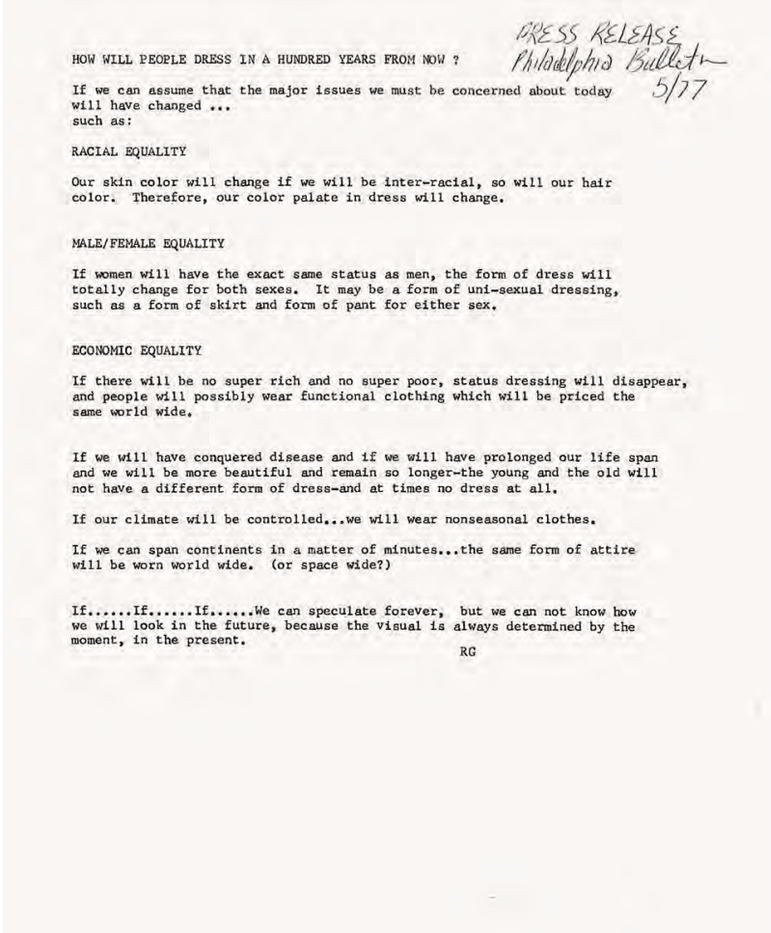
BW/mph

25.

Still-life photography: Anthony Cabacro.

Still-life photography: Anthony Cabacro.

23. Original packaging for the Thong by Rudi Gernreich, 1974.
24. Advertising campaign for Rudi Gernreich's 'Sensational Thong', 1974.
25. Letter from Barbara Walters politely declining to feature the Thong, Rudi Gernreich's new creation, on *Today*, the TV show she presented, 1974.



PRESS RELEASE
Philadelphia Bulletin
5/77

HOW WILL PEOPLE DRESS IN A HUNDRED YEARS FROM NOW ?

If we can assume that the major issues we must be concerned about today will have changed ...
such as:

RACIAL EQUALITY

Our skin color will change if we will be inter-racial, so will our hair color. Therefore, our color palate in dress will change.

MALE/FEMALE EQUALITY

If women will have the exact same status as men, the form of dress will totally change for both sexes. It may be a form of uni-sexual dressing, such as a form of skirt and form of pant for either sex.

ECONOMIC EQUALITY

If there will be no super rich and no super poor, status dressing will disappear, and people will possibly wear functional clothing which will be priced the same world wide.

If we will have conquered disease and if we will have prolonged our life span and we will be more beautiful and remain so longer-the young and the old will not have a different form of dress-and at times no dress at all.

If our climate will be controlled...we will wear nonseasonal clothes.

If we can span continents in a matter of minutes...the same form of attire will be worn world wide. (or space wide?)

If.....If.....If.....We can speculate forever, but we can not know how we will look in the future, because the visual is always determined by the moment, in the present.

RG

26.

27.

26. Rudi Gernreich's answers to the question: 'How Will People Dress in a Hundred Years From Now?', May 1977.
27. Rudi Gernreich clothing label, c.1966.

say that because I was good friends with her at one point.

From many accounts, that symbiotic relationship between Moffitt and Rudi soured towards the end of Gernreich's life, with posthumous rumours of a struggle over photo archives and even the legal rights to the Rudi Gernreich brand name. In her 1998 Vanity Fair *profile of Gernreich, writer Cathy Horyn reported that Moffitt and Claxton had acquired the trademark to Gernreich's name, with a view to finding investors and reproducing Gernreich's designs under a label that would include her name. When Horyn mentioned this to Oreste Pucciani, she wrote that, 'he replied by saying something in French that roughly means "Up yours" and calling an attorney.'*

Marylou Luther: The last time I saw Rudi, he was in the hospice. It was new. He was their first patient. Ever the pioneer. He was lucid.

Layne Nielson: The last time I saw Rudi was the night before he died. For many years when he was doing all kinds of other things, he would call me in to make a presentation for something. My sort of expertise, if I had any, was in graphic design, so I would give him that if he needed it. As the years when on, we both went off into other things. Near the end of his life, when I heard he was ill, I wrote him a note wishing him the best and he called and he said come up. This was probably in January or February 1985. Rudi had been diagnosed with cancer, and he said, 'I am writing my childhood memories in German and I want you to help me with the translation into English. I want to publish them in your hand-printing on lined paper schoolbooks.' I have the original German in his handwriting, and the English in mine, not writing but printing. It really touched me that he admired mine. That was how he wanted his stories to appear. So, for maybe two or three months, that is what I did. I was there every afternoon, going through these childhood things. That was probably when I first had a glimpse there was more to the man than I had ever known. We got through quite a few of them, but then he was taken into the hospice. I was sitting with him. One of his cousins had come from New York and we traded off sitting spells so he would never be left alone. I was with him the night before he died.

All the clothes that were left in Rudi's hands went to the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising in Los Angeles. The collection was offered to LACMA as an outright gift and it was turned down by this twit who was there at the time. I think his excuse was that 'it was too much of one designer'! LACMA also had all of the patterns that came from Walter Bass, and they were put in a dumpster. Someone on the staff called up Bella Lewitzky, a dance friend of Rudi's and she went to the dumpster with a truck and pulled all of them out to save them. They are now at UCLA Special Collections.

Rudi and his partner Oreste Pucciani bequeathed their estates to the American Civil Liberties Union, creating a living legacy, and a permanent reminder of their activism in life. The following statement comes from the ACLU:

The gift from Rudi Gernreich and Oreste Pucciani to create the Gernreich-Pucciani Endowment Fund for LGBT issues is utilized to support our LGBTQ work generally, both in Southern California and nationwide. The funds have not supported one specific case or campaign, but rather have helped make possible many important victories including:

The ACLU and our allies won a historic U.S. Supreme Court case in 1996, Romer v. Evans, establishing that gay people have the same right as other groups to seek government protection from discrimination.

• In 1997, the ACLU brought the lawsuit that triggered the first state policy authorizing joint adoption by gay couples, and in 2010, the case that ended the last state law explicitly banning adoption by gay people.

• In 2008, the ACLU won a milestone for transgender rights on behalf of Special Forces veteran Diane Schroer, whose U.S. government job offer was rescinded when officials learned that she was transgender.

• In May 2014, we won a groundbreaking ruling striking down Medicare's 30-year blanket ban on coverage of gender transition-related surgery.

• In June 2015, the ACLU won the landmark Supreme Court ruling in Obergefell v. Hodges affirming same-sex couples' constitutional right to marry.

• In 2018, we helped Anchorage become the first U.S. jurisdiction to vote to uphold transgender protections on a stand-alone measure.

'The last time I saw Rudi, he was in the hospice. It was a brand-new place. He was their first patient. Ever the pioneer. He was lucid.'

Layne Nielson: It was terrible at the end, Rudi was so heavily drugged. He was struggling with English, even though his English was much better than mine. Before he went on the drugs, I took him to the hospital one day and he was announcing to people in the hallway that he had cancer. It seemed like it was something that hit him that he just could not quite believe it. So he never expressed anything about his life to me, regrets or anything. Some years before, he did say something to someone about how he wished he hadn't done some of those outrageous things at the very end, like the show that brought him down, the impossible, overdone Turkish things. But he wasn't at all spiritual. There was no religion whatsoever anywhere. He was an atheist; we were all atheists.

Skirball from the beginning. I'm not entirely sure why they wanted me. I am an American designer, I am gay, I do a lot of social justice work, so they tell me I compare well. There are lots of things Rudi did that I look up to. I feel like he was an extremist in his time. There's the fact that he was an American but in a weird way, always pushing the boundaries. He was commercially savvy and did amazing stuff that women wanted, but it was a particular person who wanted a miniskirt when miniskirts weren't popular, or who was interested in exposing her boobs when that wasn't popular. I don't think he was anywhere near what commercial means in today's world, but he was definitely doing things that an alternative and younger community was really excited about. He was doing things black-and-white geometrics – circles, stripes, triangles, squares, plaids – and the way he combined them are an obvious influence on today's fashion prints and patterns. I also see his influence in body-slashing, body-baring, body-peeping through fabric arrangement and disarrangement. And in his lunar expeditions. Another major Gernreich contribution to fashion was the 'no-bra' bra. It probably did more to change the way clothes fit than any other single item of apparel, intimate or not. And compared with the twin torpedo brassieres of those days, which Gernreich compared to 'something you put on your head on New Year's Eve', the 'no-bra' bra for Exquisite Form[37] was indeed revolutionary, freeing women of the padding, boning and topstitching that characterized bras of that era.

'Was Rudi ahead of his time? Was Longfellow a poet? Was Shakespeare a writer? If he launched today, he'd be the fashion superhero of the moment.'

On May 9, 2019, the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles opens an exhibition called *Fearless Fashion: Rudi Gernreich*.

Bethany Montagano, curator: At the Skirball, where we are guided by the Jewish tradition of welcoming the stranger, we are inspired by how Gernreich did just that: his apparel welcomed everyone into the fold – regardless of race, religion, gender, sexuality, and body type – broadening the scope of who is 'fashionable'. We hope that visitors are inspired by Gernreich's fearless fashions and his lifelong credo that style is about freedom and authenticity.

Humberto Leon, co-designer at Kenzo and co-owner of Opening Ceremony: I've consulted on the exhibition at the that were revolutionary – the patterns, the cut-outs. The flat shoes were a good example. He was really all about women being comfortable, almost barefooted, and if you think about the time period he was working in, that is so interesting. He was also surrounded by a ton of artists. He was really carving his voice in terms of art, fashion and politics. When a designer nails all those points, it's just super exciting. The same way maybe Mugler did it in the 1980s. Gernreich was as big and as revolutionary as that in his time period.

Marylou Luther: Was Rudi ahead of his time? Was Longfellow a poet? Was Shakespeare a writer? If he launched now, I think Rudi Gernreich would be the fashion superhero of the moment. I see his influence in graphics. His

Tom Ford, designer: Rudi is certainly deserving of a better place than he has in fashion. But American designers don't have that place in fashion. The credit always goes to the Europeans, particularly the French designers working in that period. American fashion wasn't global then, which is something I've said about my new role at the CFDA. I want to bring America a bit more out of its shell. America is a very introspective country, maybe the most isolated in the world in terms of understanding that there is a world out there. That's why most American fashion designers never make a success globally like the European brands. I think it has a lot to do with the fact that America is so inward-looking.

Humberto Leon: I was excited about

October 7

Mr. Walter Reisch
420 Amapola Lane
Los Angeles. CA.
90024

Dear Mr. Reisch:

Thank you for your letter in which you ask me if I would be available for an interview regarding a television broadcast on Austria's contribution to world culture.

I am afraid I must decline your invitation.
At the risk of sounding like a self important pompous ass. I feel I must simply state that Austria has never officially paid the slightest attention to my existence except at the time we were all thrown out of our country and lost our citizenship.

While I really bear no grudges. I do not have the slightest desire to be recognized by Austria as a special (ex) citizen.

You will certainly understand that under these circumstances there would not be very much that I would like to say.

Cordially.

Rudi Gernreich

RG/db

28.

28. Letter from Rudi Gernreich to Oscar-winning, Austrian-born screenwriter Walter Reisch, 1977.

29.

30.

31.

Still-life photography: Anthony Cabacro.

©DC Comics *Batman* 1967/2015 Twentieth Century Fox Film Corp.

29. Modelling Rudi Gernreich swimwear on the runway, 1967. Photograph by Julian Wasser.
30. Rudi Gernreich with model Léon Bing wearing a look from Gernreich's Autumn 1970 military collection at the time of the Kent State shootings, during which the Ohio National Guard killed four students during an anti-war protest. Photograph by Larry Bessel.
31. Rudi Gernreich playing himself in a 1967 episode of *Batman*, entitled 'Catwoman Is Dressed to Kill'.

32.

33.

34.

32. Rudi Gernreich with Richard Avedon, 1970s.
33. Rudi Gernreich and Issey Miyake, Tokyo, 1977.
34. Actress Paula Prentiss and artist Billy Al Bengston (foreground); Dennis Hopper and Rudi Gernreich (background), in Gernreich's Santa Monica Boulevard studio, Los Angeles, 1967. Photograph by Julian Wasser.

Still-life photography: Anthony Cabacro.

34.

35.

36.

34. Rudi Gernreich with Marisa Berenson at an awards ceremony, Los Angeles, c.1967.
35. Rudi Gernreich, smoking a Sherman cigarillo, with Peggy Moffitt, 1970. Photography by Julian Wasser.
36. Rudi Gernreich with Pierre Cardin, Los Angeles, 1970. Photograph by Julian Wasser.

this exhibition because a lot of Rudi shows in the past have ended up being about Peggy Moffitt. Obviously, she's instrumental as a muse, but this time, the focus was really on Rudi, as an immigrant moving to America, finding a community and a voice, and how this guy in LA changed what women could wear through the ages. And, yes, he doesn't get the credit. He is not a part of the general conversation due to the fact he was living in a place that was really about Hollywood gowns, and there are so few designers that actually make it big out of California. That's why this exhibition is so important. It talks about the innovation *and* the politics. The Skirball is very big on social justice. It is really focusing on that more than it just being about fashion, and talking about the revolutionary aspect. It brings Rudi back into the conversation. And it's more relevant than ever, with the issues around immigration. He is the quintessential outsider who really made himself who he wanted to be. And that is such a profound statement for emigrants today. So someone like Rudi can stand the test of time. I've been meeting with people on the East Coast and in Europe to see how the show could travel.

Layne Nielson: Rudi said, 'My aim is to liberate' – and he did. There are only a handful of real milestones where you can say, 'This had an effect on changing everything that came after it.' At some point, Rudi reached the point where there were fewer and fewer of those opportunities. He was continuing to deconstruct and to cut away at clothes and if you start down that road, you know where it leads – to total nudity. And once you get there, then what do you do? Do you backtrack? If you are an avant-garde futurist, it doesn't work. Rudi's last collection was like everything and the kitchen sink, all this stuff piled on, you could barely see the model's nose and mouth. That was the end. But go back to the beginning. There was a knit sheath dress that Marilyn Monroe wore in 1954, no construction, no nothing, just a tube, and it revolutionized the entire industry. Swimsuits were never the same after Rudi came out with the five-button knit maillot.[38] That was another revolution. Then the next one was the entire brassiere industry which he changed completely, after his topless swimsuit and the 'no-bra' bra. Those are the big legacy items. And he certainly is responsible for the thong, which nobody knows, though I don't think that is revolutionary in the same way as those other three items.

Cameron Silver: [My vintage-clothing store] Decades opened in 1997 and I can remember early on, getting a very large Gernreich collection and having a mini retrospective within the store. With vintage fashion, I always tell women of a certain age that when they have a large collection of a certain designer, they create the moment. I think if I were to get 40 or 50 pieces of Rudi Gernreich in the store, it would stimulate an appetite. But it is really dependent on those collections coming in, and we haven't had a lot of Rudi come in recently. The challenge with Rudi today is that the Harmon Knitwear is heavy for a lot of women. It may limit how much we see it on people because of the weight of the fabrics. And the survival of them is difficult because of moth damage. But the silhouettes are so brilliant that when we get one in good shape, they do sell. The pieces that I am most attracted to tend to be the jersey knits with the cut-out pieces, I think they are spectacular. Fashion designers love Rudi.

Tom Ford: I've often looked back at Rudi's work for inspiration. When I did *A Single Man*, I dressed Julianne Moore in a black-and-white dress because at that time the idea of having something so graphic would have been very advanced. It wasn't Rudi Gernreich, but this character would have been ahead of the curve, would have known who he was, would have been influenced and inspired by him. Rudi was the fashion equivalent of Andy Warhol in pop. Very bold, simple, doing very advanced things for America at that time, when so much fashion was coming out of Europe. There was a cleanliness to his work, and that to me is the part that is very American. And of course, he sexually pushed a lot of the boundaries, which I've always loved, with the bare midriffs, the monokini and the cut-out pieces covering the breasts.

Marc Jacobs, designer: Anna Sui and I know Rudi Gernreich because we love fashion. Rudi was someone who thought outside the box and created these fantastic fashion illustrations and these concepts. Commerce never seemed like the motivation for what he did. He was aesthetically driven. I think he had something to say aesthetically and what he said still feels effective, with its graphic quality. If I singled out certain things – the topless bathing suit wasn't my thing – but those incredible T-shirt dresses on his muse Peggy Moffitt. Also, their working together and influencing each other created these fashion moments that still resonate with me. They were almost more Martha Graham-y. I don't know what the first thing I saw was – maybe the T-shirt dress with the stripes – but when I saw an image of Peggy Moffitt with her makeup in a creation by this man named Rudi Gernreich, I could immediately write his story or imagine his history. It gave me all of that in one image with no explanation. How much more seductive could anything be than, 'Oh my God, that gives me this! And this! And this!' I would compare him to people who came later like Stephen Burrows and Courrèges, even if Courrèges was still in the couture language, and there was none of the stuffiness or the structure or the architecture of couture in Rudi. There was just this great appreciation for the body.

Pierre Cardin, designer: I met Rudi during my first trip to New York and we instantly bonded. He invited me to his home in Los Angeles and we remained lifelong friends. I often travelled with him around the US, notably to Las Vegas and along the West Coast. He was a talented and audacious man – a real designer. I truly respected his work, and loved his taste for experimentation and provocation. He pushed things forward and shattered taboos. We were the same age and he died too young. It's such a shame that today he seems to have been slightly forgotten

Cameron Silver: I think what he did for fashion is quite similar to what Chanel did. I always think the three great designers who revolutionized women's fashion in a forward-thinking way were Chanel, Gernreich and Halston. Rudi and Halston both had that love of dance. The difference is that Halston started as a milliner. But there is that great Rudi look – the four-sleeved sweater, with two of the sleeves tied casually over the shoulders – which is a total take on Halston. I think they were playing off each other a little bit. They were the master modernists. The other side of a great designer is that you can look at the work from afar and know what it is, and Gernreich was one of those designers. You can see a certain pattern or a silhouette and be like, 'Oh, that's Rudi.'

Layne Nielson: Rudi would make fun of Halston, but Halston could not have existed without Rudi because what Halston was doing was just more Rudi. At that time, Rudi was doing some very, very simple things and that is all Halston did. I have some photographs of Halston things that appear to be direct knock-offs, but nobody picked up on that.

Elizabeth Saltzman: Halston was so out there and so revered and he was influenced heavily by Rudi. If you look at it, Halston took someone who didn't have the publicity machine to be a social power – and Halston did. There are maybe hundreds of designers who haven't made it because they didn't have social capabilities. Rudi isn't someone who gets brought back, and I guarantee you he's not studied. He should be, though. He should be part of every fashion person's education as much as any old Hollywood film star is. With all the health, wellness and fitness in the fashion world, it would be cool to do a Rudi Gernreich Award for Sportswear.

Tom Ford: Halston was more sensual, whereas Rudi Gernreich was not necessarily sensual. The bits and pieces of the body that were exposed were less sensual and more graphic, though maybe that was just Peggy Moffitt. The fabrics Halston used were slicker and drapier whereas Rudi's fabrics were stiffer and held shapes. A lot of them stood away from the body. He was more early 1960s and Halston is obviously more 1970s, but graphically, yes, he would have been very inspirational. Though I think it would have been a kind of inspiration by osmosis having grown up in America in the 1960s. Rudi was kind of an American version of what Courrèges and Pierre Cardin were doing. I'm not saying he was the only person who was creating these very simple graphic futuristic shapes but for an American designer – and a West Coast American designer, which I also love about him, of course – he was very influential. And he was way ahead of the curve with the androgyny. Even with some of his menswear, it was very much like what Pierre Cardin did with menswear. It's very hard to know who thought of what first and what was in the air, especially when you have all

'Rudi was the fashion equivalent of Andy Warhol. Bold, simple, doing advanced things for America, at a time when so much fashion was from Europe.'

'Gernreich wasn't a one-hit wonder. He was the birth of modern fashion, and he also created an incredibly liberating moment for women.'

City of Los Angeles

PROCLAMATION

Rudi Gernreich Day

WHEREAS, THE LOS ANGELES FASHION AND RETAIL COMMUNITY ARE PAYING TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF RUDI GERNREICH, ONE OF SIX AMERICAN FASHION DESIGNERS INCLUDED IN THE CITY HALL OF FAME AND ONE WHO WAS RECOGNIZED AS A LEADING INNOVATOR OF AMERICAN FASHION DESIGN; AND

WHEREAS, RUDI GERNREICH MADE A PERMANENT IMPACT ON AMERICAN FASHION DESIGN FROM HIS STUDIO IN LOS ANGELES; AND

WHEREAS, RUDI GERNREICH BROUGHT RECOGNITION TO THE LOS ANGELES FASHION INDUSTRY WITH HIS CREATIONS AND VISION THAT HAD IMPACT THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. HIS DESIGNS WERE SOCIAL COMMENTARY AND FORECAST ON OUR TIMES AND THE FUTURE LIFESTYLES OF OUR NATION;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, TOM BRADLEY, MAYOR OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES, ON BEHALF OF ITS CITIZENS, DO HEREBY SALUTE THE MEMORY OF THIS GREAT FUTURIST AMERICAN DESIGNER BY PROCLAIMING TUESDAY, AUGUST 13, 1985 AS "RUDI GERNREICH DAY" IN LOS ANGELES.

AUGUST 13, 1985

MAYOR

37.

38.

39.

37. Mayoral proclamation declaring August 13, 1985, Rudi Gernreich Day in Los Angeles.
38. The Mattachine Steps, Silverlake, Los Angeles, named after the group that laid the foundations for the gay-rights movement in the United States. The sign says, 'Harry Hay founded the Mattachine Society on this hillside on November 11, 1950.'
39. In his later years, Rudi became a soup specialist, producing numerous soup recipes for Wolfgang Puck, c.1983.

Still-life photography: Anthony Cabuero.

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40.

40. Rudi Gernreich and his long-time partner Oreste Pucciani near their home on Beech Knoll Road, Los Angeles, photographed by Alice Springs (June Newton), 1985.

these people overlapping at the same time. Who really did invent the miniskirt? Mary Quant thinks she did, but then you've got other people doing it at the same time. And graphically, I'm looking at things that were quite Ellsworth Kelly. Bridget Riley, too.

Irving Blum: If I had to think of an analogy in the art world for what Rudi was doing, it would probably be Bruce Nauman, in terms of work that was controversial and quite different from anything around. What Rudi was up to I always thought was really important. He was hard to categorize. How do you fit him in? Well, the answer is you don't. He was completely his own man, and I think people still have rather a hard time dealing with him. It's to do with his radicality. That's why he's not so well-known now. But I think people will come back to him. There'll be a time when Rudi makes sense to the world. I don't know when or why, but I am of a mind that it will certainly happen.

Cameron Silver: He was the antithesis of a one-hit wonder. He created some of the most important examples of 20th-century fashion. I like to think of it as the birth of modern fashion, but also it was an incredibly liberating moment for women.

Léon Bing: After Rudi died, I had so many clothes because I used to take samples home in lieu of payment. Most of them went to the Met. It was marvellous being his model. When they were in LA, people like Baron Niki de Gunzberg would come to the studio and I would show them the collection. And the photographer George Hoyningen-Huene. He was very old when he came, but he took a wonderful portrait of Rudi that we have on our wall to this day. Rudi will never die to me.

1. On March 12, 1938, thousands of German troops crossed into neighbouring Austria, an invasion known as the *Anschluss* ('connection') and widely welcomed by much of the Austrian population. The Nazi regime immediately unleashed violent persecution upon the country's Jewish community. More than 185,000 Jews lived in the capital Vienna –about 10% of the city's population – and in the days after the *Anschluss*, their shops were looted, their homes were ransacked, and they were forced to clean the streets on their hands and knees. Two-thirds emigrated as soon as they could, abandoning their belongings and paying exorbitant sums for exit visas. Almost all of the remaining third – some 65,000 people – were sent to concentration camps; only 200 survived.

2. In 1946 in Los Angeles, US choreographer, dancer and teacher Lester Horton founded the Lester Horton Dance Theater, one of the country's first permanent theatres dedicated to modern dance. Before his premature death in 1953 at the age of 47, he developed a pioneering dance technique based on Native American dances and anatomical study, which remains widely practiced.

3. Founded in Los Angeles in 1950, the Mattachine Society was named after the Société Mattachine, an itinerant masque group that travelled across medieval France, highlighting social injustice through its performances. Harry Hay was one of its founders and a communist who applied his experience in worker-rights activism to help persecuted homosexuals meet and organize.

4.The American Civil Liberties Union was established in 1920 to defend civil rights enshrined in the US Constitution. Today, it has 1.5 million members, and employs 300 'staff attorneys' and 'thousands of volunteer attorneys […] to fight government abuse and to vigorously defend individual freedoms.'

5.Barbara Bain was born in Chicago in 1931. She studied dance with Martha Graham, modelling to pay her way, before attending the Actors' Studio and training with Lee Strasberg. Between 1966 and 1969, she starred as Cinnamon Carter in the TV series *Mission: Impossible*. In 2016, her star became the 2,579th on the Hollywood Hall of Fame.

6. Dancer and choreographer Martha Graham (1894-1991) is arguably the most influential figure in the development of modern dance. She invented the Graham technique, a codified dance language that was the first alternative to the classical-ballet idiom, 'to increase the emotional activity of the dancer's body so that you are teaching the body, not teaching the mind'.

7. Billy Al Bengston is an artist whose work during the 1960s was influenced by California's car culture. He was a key member of the artists associated with the Ferus Gallery.

8. Patricia Faure (1928-2008) was an American art dealer, photographer, and gallery owner. From 1959 to 1970 she lived in Paris, working as a fashion photographer. Upon her return to the US, she worked in art galleries, eventually opening her own in 1979.

9. Irving Blum is an Los Angeles-based art dealer and was the owner of the Ferus Gallery. In 1961, he visited Andy Warhol in New York, where he saw the artist's images of Campbell's soup cans. Blum bought the entire series for $1,000 and a year later gave Warhol his first exhibition on the West Coast. Blum eventually represented many of the leading artists of the 1960s, including Ed Ruscha, Donald Judd and Ellsworth Kelly.

10. Model Peggy Moffitt and photographer William Claxton married in 1960.

11. In 1957, curator Walter Hopps, artist Edward Kienholz, and poet Bob Alexander founded Ferus Gallery, on North La Cienega Boulevard, Los Angeles. In its nine years of existence, Ferus became a hub for local talent, including Robert Irwin, Ed Moses and Ed Ruscha, all of whom had their first solo shows at the gallery. In 1962, Ferus showed *Andy Warhol: Campbell's Soup Cans*, the artist's first solo pop-art exhibition.

12. John Altoon (1925-1969) was an American artist and painter who started out in advertising and painting jazz album covers, before becoming a leading light of the 1960s Los Angeles art scene. A diagnosed schizophrenic, he struggled with mental health problems until his early death from a heart attack at 44.

13. California couturier James Galanos (1924-2016) created glamorous, expensive designs for a select clientele of wealthy women, including, most famously, US First Lady Nancy Reagan.

14. Elizabeth Saltzman is an editor and stylist who has dressed celebrities including Sandra Oh and Phoebe Waller-Bridge. Her mother, Ellin, is a former fashion director of Saks Fifth Avenue, Macy's and Bergdorf Goodman.

15. The child of two New York socialites, Lilly Pulitzer was born into inherited wealth from the Standard Oil fortune. In the late 1950s, while working on a juice stand supplied by her own orange groves in Florida, she came up with the idea for a colourful sleeveless shift dress that would be less prone to stains. Pulitzer's subsequent designs were extremely popular, particularly after they were worn by her one-time schoolmate, Jackie Kennedy.

16. Groundbreaking US fashion designer Claire McCardell (1905-1958) produced popular and influential lines of practical, comfortable, ready-to-wear women's clothing. Her career was launched by the Monastic, a tent-like, belted-waist dress she designed in 1938 that was easy to wash and adjustable to any body shape.

17. In 1941, US fashion designer Norman Norell (1900-1972) was the first winner of a Coty award. Known for his tailored, timeless designs, his clients included Marilyn Monroe, Lauren Bacall and Judy Garland. In 1968, he became the first American fashion designer to launch his own perfume.

18. The Wiener Werkstätte, or 'Vienna Workshop' was established in 1903 by architect Josef Hoffmann and graphic designer and painter Koloman Moser to produce high-quality objects for everyday life, from furniture, to crockery, glassware, and whole buildings. Beset by financial problems, it closed in 1932, though its pioneering approach to design laid the groundwork for Bauhaus and Art Deco.

19. When Walter Bass met Rudi Gernreich in 1951, he was a production man at a Los Angeles dress manufacturer. In 1952, they founded the company William Bass Inc. to make Gernreich's first original creations. The length of their business relationship – eight years – may have had more to do with the exclusive seven-year contract Gernreich signed at that moment, rather than a natural affinity between the two men. Gernreich later claimed that they had never gotten along.

20. Léon Bing and Peggy Moffitt appeared with Gernreich on the cover of the December 1, 1967 issue of *Time* (see page 282).

21. Adrian Adolph Greenburg (1903-1959) was a celebrated Hollywood costume designer in the 1920s and 1930s – notably on *The Women* and *The Wizard of Oz* – who set up his own fashion label in Beverly Hills in 1941.

22. Oreste Pucciani (1916-1999) was a pioneering language teacher, who taught French at UCLA for 31 years, and was one of the first champions of the 'direct method' of learning, in which all teaching takes place in the target language. A world expert on Existentialism, he wrote extensively on the work of Jean-Paul Sartre. He lived with Rudi Gernreich for over 30 years, but was not public about their relationship until 1993, eight years after Gernreich's death, when he established the Gernreich-Pucciani Endowment Fund for gay and lesbian rights.

23. Stuart Timmons (1957-2017) was a journalist, a leading expert on the LGBT history of Los Angeles, and the author of *The Trouble With Harry Hay: Founder of the Modern Gay Movement*.

24. At 1.20am on June 28, 1969, police raided the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in Greenwich Village, New York. The bar's clients refused to be arrested, attacked the police and started to riot. The event became a pivotal moment in the gay-rights movement, leading directly to the establishment of gay-rights organizations that embraced homosexuality in a far more overt way their precursors.

25. The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) was an investigative committee of the United States House of Representatives tasked with investigating subversives in the USA. From 1947 to the early 1950s, it focused on rooting out suspected communists working in Hollywood. The committee would subpoena citizens to high-profile hearings in which they would be asked to provide the names of others they suspected of being subversive, who would then also receive subpoenas. Anyone who refused to answer questions or provide names would either be blacklisted from their industry or indicted for contempt of Congress and jailed.

26. Bella Lewitzky (1916-2004) was a pioneering modern dance choreographer and teacher. Born to Russian Jewish immigrants to the US in a utopian socialist community in the Mojave desert, she founded Dance Theater of Los Angeles in 1946 with Lester Horton, where she danced with Rudi Gernreich. In 1951, Lewitzky was called before the House Committee on Un-American Activities and asked to identify possible members of the Communist Party. She refused, saying, 'I am a dancer, not a singer.'

27. Born in Chicago in 1939, Larry Bell has been known since the early 1960s for his work that explores and manipulates light in sculptures and paintings.

28. A successful model in the 1960s, Léon Bing moved through the celebrity circles of California before becoming a critically acclaimed author of nonfiction books, beginning in 1991 with *Do or Die*, a detailed reportage on gang life in South Central Los Angeles, for which she gained the trust of both the notorious Crips gang and their arch-rivals, the Bloods.

29. LACMA, or Los Angeles County Museum of Art, is the largest art museum in the western US, holding more than 150,000 works. The building, in the Miracle Mile neighbourhood of Los Angeles, is currently being redesigned by Swiss architect Peter Zumthor.

30. The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA) focuses on post-1940 US and European art spread across three locations in greater Los Angeles.

31. In 1960, Rudi Gernreich began a long-standing affiliation with the company Harmon Knitwear, based in Marinette, Wisconsin. It produced more affordable items than were available from Gernreich's own brand, including his 'monokini' topless swimsuit in 1964.

32. Anglo-American fashion designer Charles James (1906-1978) was a dominating fashion force for over a three decades, until his retirement in 1958. Credited by Christian Dior as the inspiration for the French designer's New Look, James' designs for ballgowns, capes and coats were hugely influential. An eccentric, snobbish perfectionist, the couturier was one of the principal inspirations for the designer in Paul Thomas Anderson's 2017 film *Phantom Thread*.

33. Founded in 1887 as a shoe-repair shop next to the old Metropolitan Opera House in New York, Capezio is a highly regarded manufacturer of dance shoes.

34. Gerry and Sylvia Anderson were a married couple now best known for their puppet-based TV shows, such as *Thunderbirds* (1964-1966). Their live-action series *Space: 1999*, starring Barbara Bain and her then husband Martin Landau, ran for two seasons between 1975-1977; it featured guest appearances by actors including Joan Collins, Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing.

35. Tommy Perse owns Maxfield, an influential fashion boutique in Los Angeles opened in the early 1980s, where he became famous for embracing the colour black.

36. Stage and set designer Tony Duquette (1914-1999) was a favourite of the Hollywood set, using red coral and seashells as a design signature. His most enduring legacy may be the Dawnridge Estate in Beverly Hills, his psychedelic, rococo, fever-dream fantasy home.

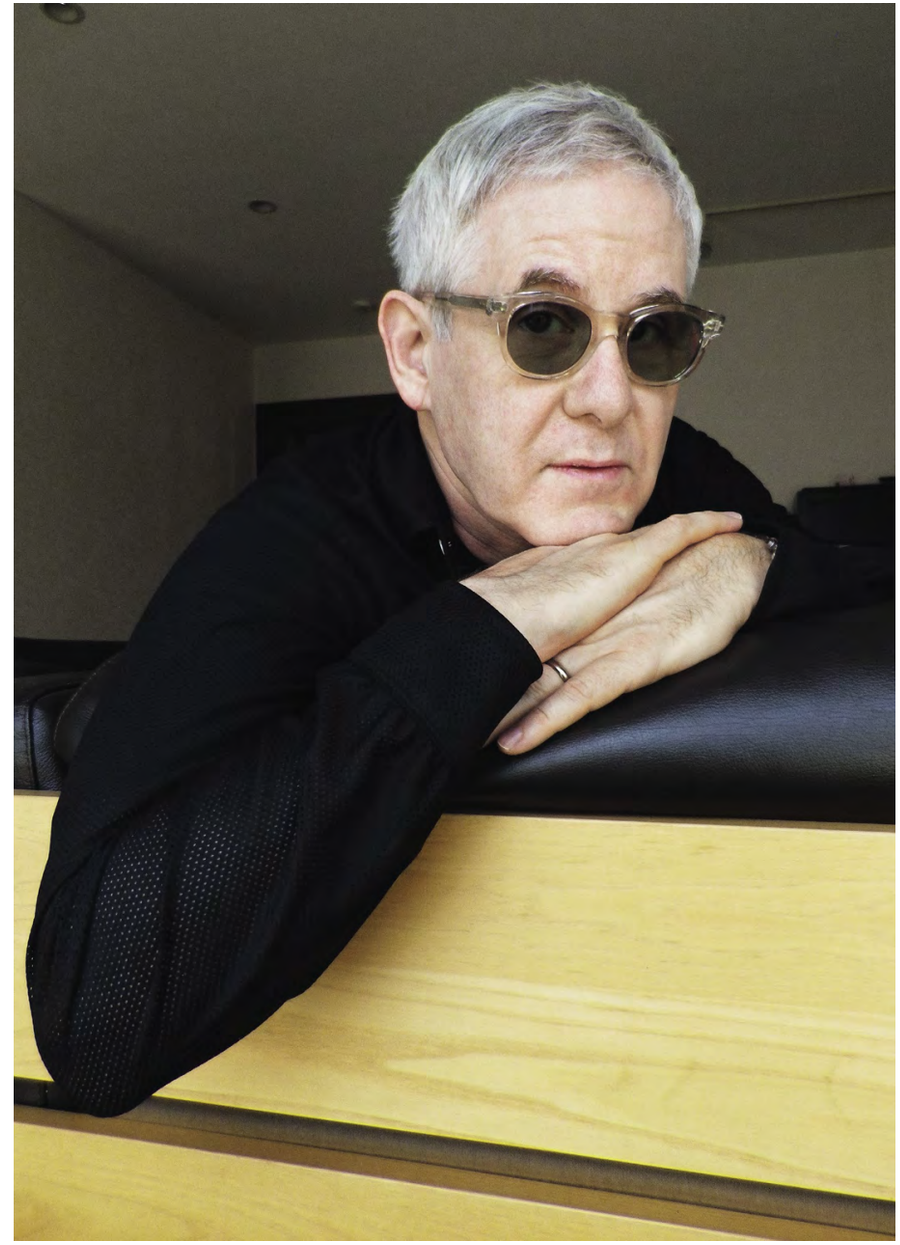
37. Rudi Gernreich's 'no bra' was a wireless bra made of sheer nylon net. Part of Gernreich's *no* collection, produced in the mid-1960s, the bra was designed at a time when not wearing a bra was seen as a political statement in favour of sexual liberation, second-wave feminism, or both.

38. Gernreich's wool-knit maillot with five plastic buttons was produced by Westwood Knitting Mills around 1958.

‘Collaboration is one plus one equals three.’

Fraser Cooke on the rise of the ‘x factor’.

By William Alderwick
Portrait by Fumiko Imano



Collaboration is a driving force in fashion and culture today. The headlines telling us two brands are coming together, each multiplied by the other to drop limited-edition product, are now a regular fashion fixture. At their best, these cross-pollinating creative encounters bring new techniques, visions and design languages to a familiar product. The most iconic define a moment and open up new possibilities both aesthetically and culturally.

Over the past 15 years, as collaborations between artists and designers and larger brands have moved from the edges of the fashion world to become one of its defining dynamics, Fraser Cooke has overseen Nike's groundbreaking – and commercially successful – partnerships with designers including Virgil Abloh, Riccardo Tisci, Jun Takahashi, Rei Kawakubo, and Chitose Abe of Sacai.

To better understand the dynamics of collaboration, *System* caught up with Cooke – or to give him his full title, Nike's Global Senior Director of Influencer Marketing and Collaborations – in Paris, where he was to launch the brand's Women's World Cup Collection, the kits to be worn by 14 countries at this summer's event being held in France. He discussed the defining encounters that have shaped his own career, one that parallels streetwear's rise to fashion royalty, and curated a portfolio of the most culturally influential collaborations of the past 25 years.

Photograph: Tolga Akmen.

'Sneakers had become a more immediately visible way of differentiating yourself.'
A conversation with Fraser Cooke
Paris, February 28, 2019

'Collaboration is another way of looking. It can allow you to look at the familiar with a slight twist or create something completely new that would not otherwise have been possible. It's like music: certain collaborations just really capture a moment in time.

I grew up in East London. I first rode on a skateboard in 1977 during a street party for the Queen's Silver Jubilee. Somebody had a really shitty one with roller-skate wheels, but it really captured my imagination. I was at an age where I was starting to open up and that was the kick-off point for me. Back then in the UK, fashion was very tribal. You had to have a certain pair of loafers or a certain type of Dr. Martens, a certain kind of Levi's, Ben Sherman and Fred Perry shirts. It was about brands as signifiers, but it hadn't got to the point where you needed to layer something else on top. I remember first getting into the MA-1 jacket, in a sort of skinhead style, then the Mod thing.

In the 1980s, you had style magazines like *The Face* and *i-D*, with people like Simon Foxton and Ray Petri, and Buffalo, pulling together certain looks. They were the original stylists. But what we now call streetwear didn't yet have a brand specifically catering to it. That absolutely started with Shawn Stussy and his Stüssy brand. Before him, there was skate- and surfwear, there was high fashion, there was workwear, and a few people mixing it up. But he was the only person who pulled together everything that was happening at that time. I first saw Stüssy in *Thrasher* magazine and I saw all these different elements – hip hop, surfing, skating – all pulled together by this one brand with its graffiti tag-style signature logo.

I left school young at 16 and got a job in the Stock Exchange. I really didn't like it from day one; I was only there because I didn't know what I wanted to do. I used to spend my time down at WHSmiths in Liverpool Street Station looking at magazines like *NME*, *The Face* and *i-D*, and *Record Mirror* looking at the DJ charts. I was really into music by then, buying 12-inches. Then I met a friend who worked in a Vidal Sassoon hair salon on South Molton Street, and I felt like hairdressers and shop assistants were somehow operating in this creative zone. The first Comme des Garçons store was over the road from the salon and Yohji Yamamoto was there, too. I saw this creative world – and I wanted to be a part of it.

That was why I started cutting hair – it got me closer to what was happening in London. I started going to places like the Wag Club and warehouse parties, the nightlife side of things, and eventually began DJing on the side. After a while I realized that hairdressing wasn't what I really loved and was hired by Shawn Turpin who had a store called Passenger and wanted to buy American sportswear. So we started going out to the US on buying trips, mostly to New York, which was very inspiring in the late 1980s. My mate Karl Templer was doing the hype section of *The Face* magazine, laying out new cool stuff. I gave him the T-shirts I sourced from an American brand called Pervert and he put them in the magazine with my phone number alongside. Before I knew it, people were calling to stock them and I became a de facto distributor of American T-shirts. It was really a very fun means to an end because it meant I had to go to the US, where all the stuff that inspired me was coming from, like skate, hip-hop and the cross pollination with post-punk.

'In the 1980s, what we now call streetwear didn't yet have a brand specifically catering to it. That absolutely started with Shawn Stussy.'

A few years later I met Michael Kopelman who had started [clothing importer and distributor] Gimme 5 and had been working at Black Market Records. He knew my flatmate James Lavelle who had just started his record label Mo'Wax. I knew Michael was affiliated with the International Stüssy Tribe and was close to some of the interesting people on the scene like James Lebon and a whole West London creative fashion crew who were a few years older than me. We really came together when his previous partner left Gimme 5, and we ended up doing a bit of travelling together, going over to Los Angeles and San Diego to these trade shows that were primarily for surf and skate, and were really a breeding ground for the beginning of streetwear. We decided to do something more solid together after finding a common affinity. That ended up being the Hideout, our store that was initially named Hit and Run. Michael ran Gimme 5, which was representing Stüssy and breaking Japanese brands like Hysteric Glamour, Bathing Ape and Goodenough, while I was managing and buying alongside him, out front in the store. The Gimme 5 experience was really formative for me – the company pulled together the Stüssy thing, and the best of the UK, Japan and the US, which is where all this started.

Once we'd been doing that for a few years we opened the sneaker store Foot Patrol. It was the beginning of the movement of sneaker stores at the time, of which we were one. There were also Alife Rivington Club in New York; Undefeated, which had just opened in LA; and Atmos and other places in Japan. Sneakers were becoming a more immediately visible way of differentiating yourself and the industry had started doing special colours and editions. Adidas had ventured into the beginnings of 'official' collaboration with Run DMC in 1986, which was very early on. Nike was collaborating in a different way at that time. It had always worked with athletes from its inception, but it wasn't yet doing it in an overtly commercial sense. In the late 1990s, it did do some early collaborations with Junya Watanabe, but they were in really small quantities that would go in the Comme store.

It was natural for Nike to want somebody who was already part of that sub-culture to work on the project. They needed a person who could naturally navigate the scene on their behalf, and I guess that's how I fitted in. Initially, I worked with interesting retailers running small boutiques, people who were all friends. It was only a couple of thousand pairs of shoes here and there, sometimes hundreds or even 50 pairs of Hyper Strikes, but they were highly sought after, and generated a lot of energy and excitement at a very small scale. What's changed over time is the number, depth, breadth and the richness of projects that are out there. Product has become the focus, and for some brands the other stuff – like the reason to exist or the storytelling – isn't always as prominent. But when these elements *are* considered, you can start bringing people into a bigger idea, an elevated experience of the brand – that's the goal. Because consumers expect a lot from collaborations now. We've trained people culturally to value them and it's become the norm. What hasn't become the norm is bringing a thoughtful depth to the way they're presented. When we did the Ten project with Virgil Abloh, we wanted it to be about more than just lining up outside a store. So we invited customers to come and listen to Peter Saville or Nick Knight or Michèle Lamy, so they walked away with more than just a product. The whole package created a valuable memory. Sometimes it's about getting people to look at a story that they wouldn't otherwise look at.

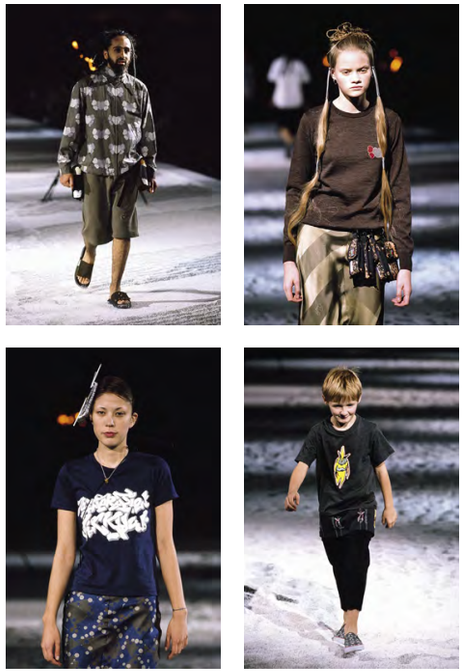
'When Nike did the Ten project with Virgil Abloh, we wanted it to be about more than just hundreds of people lining up outside a store.'

Retail is a real labour of love – you've got to *really* be into it to do it well for any length of time. That's why it's normal that a place like Colette, for example, wouldn't last forever. A store is a moment in time, and that's how we saw The Hideout, a gathering spot for a scene, for a group of like-minded people in London. For me, Nike was the next step.

The good thing about Nike is that it's a brand people have an emotional connection to. It goes beyond being a sports company despite the fact that that has been its sole focus and roots from the beginning. Many of the products have taken on a real cultural currency that transcends their original intent. At that time, a few people there – [CEO] Mark Parker, [special projects director] Sandy Bodecker, John Jay at Wieden+Kennedy as creative director, Trevor Edwards, who left Nike last year, to whom I'd been introduced by my good friend Giorgio de Mitri of Sartoria and Stash – began exploring broader experiential avenues. They knew there was a subculture embracing and adopting elements of Nike in unique and diverse ways that went beyond the pure intent of the brand, and they wanted to try and harness and build on that creative energy.

Nike doesn't need to collaborate by just slapping somebody's name on a sneaker. That's not enough. We need to do stuff that truly has synergy, something that tells a richer story. The brand needs to be learning and vice versa; it's an exchange. It is interesting when you can pull the partner into your space, while they pull you into theirs. That's how you end up with something completely new. When you're with somebody who has a distinct personality and ideas about what they do, how do you find the right place where you're both comfortable? How do you find a new language? The best people really push you to do stuff that's creative. And they get to express themselves once they embrace that.

Michael Kopelman used to say if my nose itches, I scratch it, I don't ask why it's itching. That makes sense to me. I do analyse a lot, but a lot of it is gut feeling and what feels right at the time. It's instinct driven.'



Undercover 'Generation Fuck You' × Kaws, Futura, Stash and WTAPS at Toho Studios, Tokyo; 'Teaser' Spring/Summer 2000 collection and show (1999)

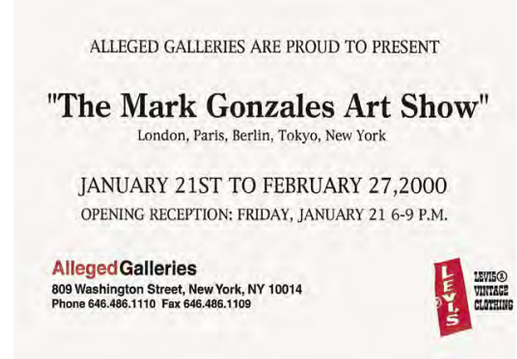
This was just so far ahead of its time. It's normal now to have high fashion mixed with street, but back then it wasn't *at all*, apart from a few people like this out in Japan. Futura, Stash, and Tet from WTAPS worked on it with Jun Takahashi. At that time all those guys – Jun, WTAPS, Neighborhood, Hiroshi Fujiwara and Nigo – were part of one extended interwoven family. It was that Harajuku scene, so it wasn't strange for them to work with each other at the time. It was a collaborative effort. It certainly captured the mixture of the scene that was going on in London, New York and Tokyo. I went to the show. It was before I moved to Japan, but I was already buying for the Hideout and we were already affiliated to Undercover. I already knew Kaws and Futura through Stash. We were all in Tokyo at that time, an international group of friends. Jun staged the show, which was overtly street, at Toho Studios. That was where Kurasawa shot a lot of his films and part of the inspiration behind the show was Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai* and his other classic films. Jun was cutting and pasting together all these different elements. He brought it all together in a new and fresh way and elevated it through his great design enhanced by his art direction. I first met him in Harajuku, on my first trip to Japan in 1997. I went there to help Hitomi, who works with Gimme 5, escort models to an Undercover show. We flew over 10 or 12 models from London to Tokyo to walk in the show. It was nuts. I met Jun outside a bar called Hide and Seek in Harajuku; we had a chat and I immediately thought, 'What a nice guy.' He just seemed cool. I was dealing with Nigo and the A Bathing Ape people, but of course Jun used to work with Nigo as well. They had a store together before, so it was all within that same circle. Within a year I was going back and crashing at his house on my buying trips to Japan. 'Generation Fuck You' was very memorable and if you did the whole thing again and made a Generation Fuck You 2.0, it would still be relevant and modern, even with the same people. Futura painted the new Supreme store this season. Kaws just had one of his paintings sell for over $14 million in an auction of Nigo's collection. It's funny how people roll in and out of being in vogue. It just feels right again now.

©Undercover; still-life photography by Hiroyuki Sugimoto (right).

Nike HTM woven sneakers (2002)

HTM is an experimental design group made up of Hiroshi Fujiwara, Nike shoe designer Tinker Hatfield, and Nike CEO Mark Parker. This shoe is from 2002 and I picked it because it's a kind of shoe that didn't exist before: it's not for any particular sport, but it's taking elements from sport. It's more to do with construction. At the time, Tinker and his team were working with traditional techniques of how to make something comfortable that moved well with the foot; Hiroshi provided the aesthetic finish. It was when we began to be more thoughtful about footwear collaborations, not just giving people what they already had. It's not taking an Air Jordan and colouring it up; it's about presenting something new to the world, working both with people who are key at Nike, like Tinker and Mark, and somebody who was at the height of his street cred and has a sharp eye, like Hiroshi. The combination of these three people on this product was exciting for people who are into sneakers. HTM was an accelerator, because it started to pull disparate elements together into a more cohesive whole in a more visible way. At the time, streetwear companies were starting to pop up and people in Japan were beginning to know about the scene. Then suddenly, you get Nike, this giant, and Hiroshi, the person who pioneered the scene, coming together for a product; it supercharged the interest that was already building. It was a moment of momentum towards where we are today. It was also disruptive, because it's a shoe that not everyone could love straightaway.

Courtesy of Nike; courtesy of Levi's.



Mark Gonzales x Levi's (1998)

So many people were into Mark Gonzales as a character. He's such a seminal guy, one of a few who really invented modern-day street skating. He's also an artist and this collaboration was a way of supporting his art and doing something creatively progressive together. The brand was launching Levi's Vintage in the UK and the first project I did with them, which didn't result in any product, was a big art show at the Tramshed in Old Street with Futura, Stash and Lee Quinones. It was a big group show where we built a complete one-on-one scale New York subway car. The back half was flat, the other half we got made by set builders who work on movies and then we displayed all their artwork. Levi's sponsored that and wanted to do something else, so we got Mark Gonzales to paint jackets and jeans, and the brand supported a tour. It was Mark's art applied to jackets. He hand-painted them and they were part of an exhibition. Then Levi's reproduced the hand-painted jackets to sell and support some art shows that he did. That was a good project and the jackets looked cool.

Rei Kawakubo × Louis Vuitton (2014)

This was part of a wider collaboration with Marc Newson, Karl Lagerfeld, Cindy Sherman, Frank Gehry and Christian Louboutin. What Rei did was really interesting: take a bag and cut holes in it, so there's almost a face, two eyes and a mouth. It's not really fully functional as a bag any more – and I think that's great. It's still Louis Vuitton, but also speaks to the Comme des Garçons spirit – and that's a true collaborative balance. This one is irreverent whereas the collaborations we've done with Rei needed to be more functional. They still have to perform to a standard. She's always been more respectful of the basic form of the shoe, although there have been a few wild ones. She's amazing to work with. Looking at this bag reminded me of a 1996 Helmut Lang and Vuitton collaboration where he created a DJ record box. They advertised it with a shot of Grandmaster Flash standing on the top. That was a sought-after item. Virgil did his take on the DJ box in his first season at Louis Vuitton menswear in another interesting way.

©Louis Vuitton Malletier; still-life photography by Hiroyuki Sugimoto (right).

Nike × Tom Sachs NikeCraft Mars Yard 1 (2012)

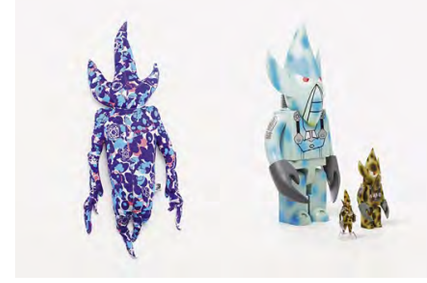
Tom Sachs did a show about a fictitious mission to Mars at the Park Avenue Armory in New York, and that's where we launched the collaboration. Tom didn't want people to just line up and buy the stuff we made for it. He wanted to make them do something physically and mentally demanding, a test of dexterity and endurance. He's actually quite into keeping fit, so he made this assault course that you had to finish in order to buy the shoes. So we did an event with people literally climbing up a rope and ringing a bell, and we had this remote control helicopter that you had to fly and pick stuff up with. Tom got drill sergeants ordering people to go back and repeat the tasks properly. You became part of a living art installation, but at the end you earned the right to have the shoes.

He really forced us at Nike to mass produce a product while trying to make it look handmade. All while his art was doing the opposite with deliberately non-polished cheap-looking, but very intricate objects like a papier-mâché moon-landing vehicle. It was a fantastic example of collaboration. We would never have come up with this thing on our own. We continue to work with Tom and he continues to try and drive us crazy with his approach, but we always end up with really, really interesting results. This is collaboration on quite a deep level for everyone, including our customers. It's not just 'rush here today and get this shoe and put it on eBay'; no, you've got to really experience something together to even get the shoe. It's collaboration as a journey.

Futura × Mo'Wax × UNKLE (1998-)

James Lavelle and I are long-time friends. I used to be his flatmate and work at Mo'Wax, his label, for a while. When he wanted to do some merchandise like print T-shirts and record bags, I ended up doing them for him. He's such a good creative director and orchestrator; he just pulls together different elements so well. James was a big fan of Futura's work and started commissioning him to do paintings for the Mo'Wax label and his own band UNKLE. His Pointman character that he'd been doing for a long time became the band's symbol. At the time, Futura, who had come out of the original graffiti-based birth of the hip-hop movement, was always super ahead in terms of his art, like an abstract painter really; he was doing stuff with James Nigo and A Bathing Ape. The Beastie Boys were in there, too. This is such a good example of the scene around the Hideout. All these things represent a moment in time. I can't think of many other music projects that went so far in incorporating everything together. James took it to an almost twisted level; there was art and design and films and physical toys and of course, the records. He was trying to create a complete universe around the band.

Still-life photography by Vinny Whiteman.



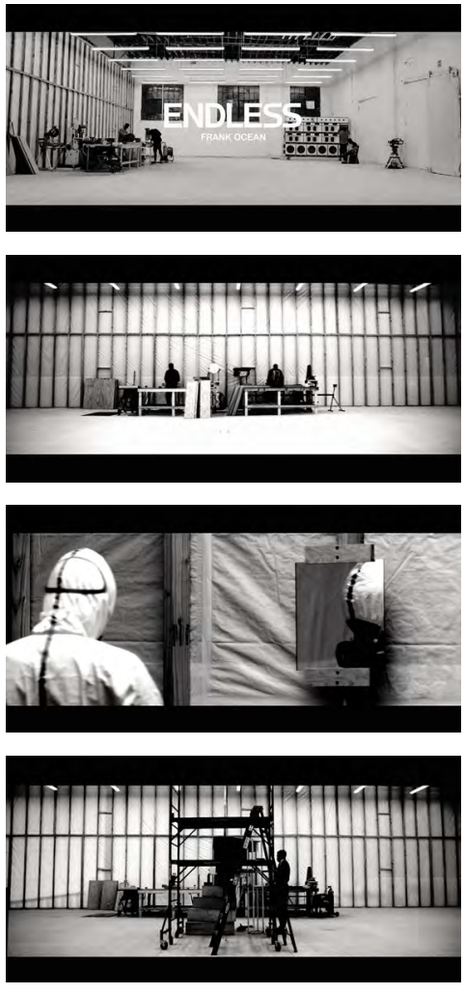
Undercover × Levi's Leather Type I (2017)

The Levi's Type I is just so iconic; it's been referenced a million times, because these basic menswear staples always work well. What Jun Takahashi did with it is so interesting – a simple, but just beautiful version made out of really soft lambskin leather, with no graphics, but with a slightly off-centre zip. He also did versions of the Type II and a Type III, and a Type I with lyrics from the German band Can printed on it. The Type II was extended at the bottom to make it into a chore jacket, which was an interesting way to play with shape. It's very clear what the base of it is, but he morphed it into something else without taking it too far. Sacai also worked with Levi's jackets, but they took it much further, by deconstructing and messing around with them, as did Junya Watanabe. But I still always like the jacket as it is, the original.

Still-life photography by Hiroyuki Sugimoto (left); photography by Harri Peccinotti (right).

White Dunk × 25 Japanese artists (2003)

Back in 2003, we did this touring exhibition, *White Dunk*, that began at the Palais de Tokyo here in Paris, and then moved to Tokyo where we housed it in a building constructed to look like a giant shoebox, next to the Prada building. Mark Parker and a Japanese Portland-based retailer and art collector selected 25 Japanese artists, from manga artists to sculptors, and invited them to use the Dunk as a canvas for all this art. We created a lot of content for this, video and books, and we did shoes for each city: Tokyo was a white canvas Dunk, almost like Carhartt canvas but white; Paris was art on a shoe; and though we didn't do White Dunk in London, we did have a London Dunk, which was grey, because it's grey there, and had the Thames on it. The shoe was just a starting point. Some of the people really abstracted it to the point where you can't even tell what it is any more. Some of them really took a direct reference from a basketball shoe. There's one where the whole thing is a contraption where it literally dunks a doughnut into a coffee cup (bottom right image); it actually worked! *White Dunk* was about supporting artists and allowing people to have more free expression. It was an amazing, interesting, immersive experience, and a way of bringing a lot of people into the conversation.



Frank Ocean × Tom Sachs, *Endless* LP launch with Apple Music (2016)

I wanted to also look at collaboration in other ways, beyond just footwear or product. In 2016, Frank Ocean, who's a really uncompromising artist, released two new albums. One of them, *Endless*, came with this 45-minute video in which he's building a ladder to nowhere in the artist Tom Sachs' New York studio. You watch this thing happening in the film as you listen to the album, which is amazing. I think he's really the artist of his generation. The collaboration was interesting because Frank and Tom genuinely know and like each other, and it was just such a disruptive and different way to release a record. You could only get it at that time, and the visuals were weird, quite boring in some ways and hard to watch. It forced you to be a little bit uncomfortable, which is what good things tend to do.

©Frank Ocean. *Endless* music video, Apple Music; Errolson Hugh (right).

ACRONYM × Buzz Rickson's MA-1ACR (MODIFIED) jacket (unreleased prototype)

This is a nerdy one. Buzz Rickson's is a Japanese company that does amazing reproductions. Whoever runs it has a crazy archive of vintage Japanese and American World War II and beyond military stuff, and they're reproducing it down to the zips and exact thread counts. Errolson Hugh of ACRONYM, who I've been working with for years, became involved with Buzz Rickson's because he's friends with the writer William Gibson and in Gibson's book *Pattern Recognition*, the main character, Cayce, has a fictional black Buzz Rickson's MA-1 jacket. The company decided to make it because Gibson wrote about it – it became a reality afterwards. Errolson was excited about doing this jacket because he's done various takes on MA-1s, just like every street-level men's designer, but he always felt that he could improve upon it. His design process is to start from scratch and build a pattern around the objective. Form follows function, literally. But this thing already existed so he was wondering, 'How can I take something but improve it?' I've never seen this jacket in person because there are only two samples in existence. He has the one that's in the above photo (that's Errolson in his Berlin studio photographing Hiroshi Fujiwara wearing it) and Buzz Rickson's has the other. It was never made commercially; Errolson doesn't know why. Maybe if we show it now, we can make it happen, just like the Gibson version. We can perhaps will it into life!

Sacai × Nike LDV Waffle (2019)

There's been a tremendous response to these shoes already. It's classic Sacai, which is about clashing two things together, so sometimes the front is different to the back. When we sat down, Sacai said to our design team, 'We just want to take two shoes and clash them together.' Somebody said, 'OK, you mean something like this?' And took two pictures of vintage shoes, folded the pages and laid them next to each other. And that's where it started from. We just worked from there. It's the LDV Waffle, really old running Nike shoes with a colour palette drawing on that heritage as well. The other shoe in that collection is the Blazer and Dunk mixed, so two basketball shoes smashed together. That absolutely speaks to Nike, but it absolutely speaks to Sacai, and it seems like this is going to be one of the most popular shoes of the year. The LDV Waffle has a double tongue, double logo and a double sole. The design team at Nike had fun doing this; it's a different way of engineering for us. This is the second time we've worked on footwear with Sacai, and the results show we're in sync.

Courtesy of Nike; Louis Vuitton Malletier/Ludwig Bonnet.

Supreme × Louis Vuitton (2017)

This was the moment when the balance tipped and street and fashion came of age. Nothing validated it more than this collaboration. Kim Jones absolutely comes from a street background, and as creative director of menswear at Louis Vuitton, he always paid homage to things he respected. And Supreme, if you go back, had done a fake LV-esque take on a skateboard; I think they'd had a cease and desist from LV back then. But then they finally did this thing together. It talked to the whole Dapper Dan, New York, fake Gucci, LV uptown style, that whole clash, but now recognized as legitimate. It was the coming-out parade for everything we'd been involved in. It was a long time coming and this was the moment. The current generation of designers has grown up with street, so I think that it feels quite natural for them. People like Riccardo Tisci have brought a street element into high-fashion houses. Without Kim being at Vuitton first, and this collaboration, I don't think it would make as much sense for someone like Virgil to take over at the helm at Vuitton.

Hermès × Leica M7 (2009)

A collaboration that shows a really good way of adding a layer of premium to an already premium brand. Both brands – one French, one German – are about precision and craftsmanship in their respective field, and together they made a beautiful, timeless, high-end product. They're both quite restrained. Hermès isn't wild; it's not pop in the way that Vuitton can be. It's about craftsmanship. Leica is all about precision and detail. People don't realise how much goes into these collaborations. They're simple to look at, but it's complex to arrive at this level of functionality. This particular model is the film version – it's not digital – so it can't date. They're bloody expensive to begin with, but this thing's crazy expensive.

Still-life photography by Hiroyuki Sugimoto (left); courtesy of Nike (right).

Off-White × Nike (2017-2018)

There's never been such an industry-changing footwear collaboration as the Ten. It is just so rich with all those classics, shoes that people really love, and some newer silhouettes in the mix. The way that Virgil worked with our team was not to deviate too much from the shoes' intrinsic design, while at the same time making them distinct. It's not just the colour or material; there are pattern changes, material changes. The scale and impact of this is similar to Supreme × Vuitton, but different in that it was so much more than just the shoes. It was also special curated talks: Gilles Peterson talking about music and pirate radio with Virgil in London; Spike Lee in New York on a panel talking about Nike and advertising and film; and Virgil talking to Kim Jones at the Barbican, a newer designer talking to a more established designer. It was Virgil giving kids the cheat codes to understand what took him years to figure out. He wants to throw out all this information hopefully to inspire them to be the next generation of really creative kids. For us and Virgil, it was like, here are the products that you all love, but let's explore and have fun with all this other cultural stuff that led me, Virgil Abloh, to want to be in a position working with Nike on shoes. It was a really rich, virtuous circle.

Shawn Stussy × Carhartt × Tommy Boy staff jacket (1992)

Carhartt and Stüssy released a jacket for Dover Street Market in January this year, which is based on this one from over 25 years ago. Not the same colour, but the same shape, a staff jacket. Shawn Stussy's not involved with Stüssy anymore, but back then he was putting together the original International Stüssy Tribe, a group of DJs and people involved in sub-cultures like skate. It was a loose collective across New York, London and Tokyo. The story goes that one of the original Tribe members Albee Ragusa worked at Tommy Boy records and asked Shawn if he could do a special jacket for them. I have one; it's really faded now, almost white, because all the brown has washed out of it. Back then, it was an early example of friends collaborating on something. Today, it's a genuine streetwear artefact.

Still-life photography by Hiroyuki Sugimoto (left) and Sofiane Ryan Jabeur (right).

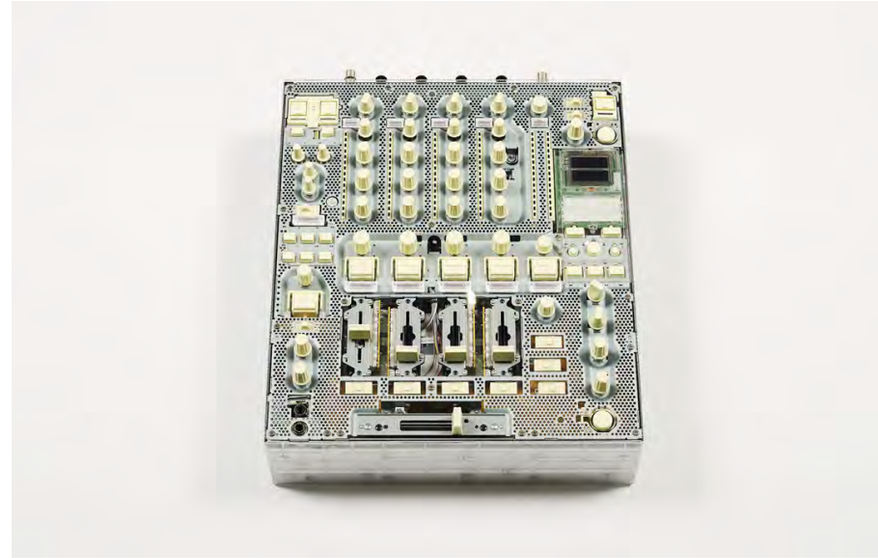
Bearbrick World Wide Tour (2007)

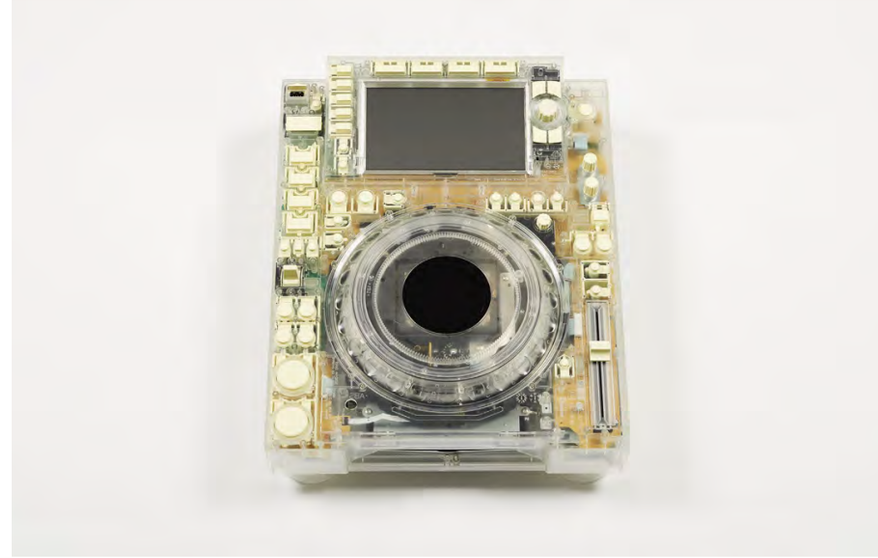
This is a good one because such an incredible list of artists took part using this basic thing. Bearbricks aren't that unexpected or surprising these days, but there was a moment when they were highly sought after, and really symbolized the time. They became this completely mad canvas to paint on for so many different people. An amazing list of names produced so much and made so many variations. Nike supported the Bearbrick World Wide Tour and toured it a little bit. The show touched a lot of people. Bearbricks were often quite cheap initially, but some of them are now worth a lot of money. It was a fun, creative exercise that rolled along because different artists were added as it went. If Warhol were around he'd totally get this sort of thing: it's a useless object; it does nothing for you; you don't need it; you can't wear it; it's just decoration. This was collaboration for the sake of collaboration, which in itself is interesting as an idea. That company has had tremendous success with this one cute bear character that continues to take on so many different appearances.

Electric Cottage × Vestax, mixer (1997)

Before Fragment, Hiroshi Fujiwara used to have a brand and design project called Electric Cottage, and he would DJ really well. This object is still culturally relevant to streetwear people. The Vestax collaboration was around the same time as the Motorola StarTAC phone [launched in 1996]. It was this little flip phone, really small, but it was a cool one to have because it had a distinct design. At the time, there was this whole transparent skeleton vibe. There were transparent pagers and transparent Palm Pilot devices. I remember Hiroshi managed to get a transparent third-party case for his StarTAC. Virgil, too, has recently collaborated on mixers and CDJs, with Pioneer, born out of a similar thought process. He wasn't even aware of Hiroshi's one; I showed it to him and he was like, 'No way!' These things aren't copied; people can arrive at the same thing by chance. And, you know, Virgil has always DJ-ed: there's that great photo of him as a 17-year-old in his bedroom DJ-ing. He did a party in Paris the other night and was the first one there, he couldn't wait to get on the decks!

Still-life photography by Hiroyuki Sugimoto (left) and Antoine Seiter (right).





"Pioneer DJ c/o Virgil Abloh"
Top: "TRANSPARENT" DJM-900NXS2
Bottom: "TRANSPARENT" CDJ-2000NXS2

What can print do that digital cannot?

The state of magazines by the industry's editors.

Portfolio by Juergen Teller, concept by Dovile Drizyte

BOWIE
ANALOG
tattoo
Rolling Stones

Fantasy & Science Fiction
BLUES MATTERS!
JOE BONAMASSA
ModernMatter
intelligence
iPhone
Samsung
COMPUTER ARTS
Corduroy

iPad
iPad
ATM
CLUTCH
HOLIDAY

FANTASTIC
General
DILLS
KYC

jack
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC
LAST TRIBES AMAZON
MITT

Tootsie
POPS
The GOLDEN BAG AWARD for
Best Use of Limited Store Space
is awarded to
Village Global - Casa
LOVE MAGAZINES?
• PLEASE LIMIT BROWSING
• NO PHOTOS OF THE CONTENT
THANK YOU
CASA MAGAZINES
ATM

READER
READER
WHAT I'LL SPEAK
WHAT I'LL SPEAK

DURACELL
Panasonic
VISA
100 MOST SUCCESSFUL Women
backstage CALL SHEET
1998
PURPLE
double
KARDASHIAN SECRETS
System
J'adore Kim

FANTASTIC MAN
ALI
THIS IS OUR WATCH
THIS BUSINESS WAS NAMED
Business of the Month
gvshp
gvshp.org/bom
GREENWICH VILLAGE SOCIETY FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

SWEDISH SNUS
BIC

Feel free to flip through the magazines but
girls
EMBARRASSING

WOLFY WOLFY
Magazine
over
Fashion
interest
SHOMG
NOTHING
BUTTHOLE OF EVERYTHING

ANHATTA
RAKE
Holidays!

ANALOG
SCIENCE FICTION AND FACT
BOWIE

READER
Beer
edible
POETRY
BOAT
ROCKICE
SKYER
HABITS
Glamcult

Post-production: Catalin Plesa @ Quickfix Retouch.

Emanuele Farneti,
editor in chief, *Vogue Italia* and *L'Uomo Vogue*

When I am asked to talk about the relationship between print and digital, I mention an anecdote that doesn't have to do with *Vogue Italia*, but another magazine published by Condé Nast Italia, *Wired Italia*. A few years ago, the magazine was at a crossroads and had to decide whether to keep running the print version, which was not profitable, or to close it and continue only with the digital version and events, which were remarkably lucrative.

Upon reflection, we came to the conclusion that, without the paper version, the site would be just another site in the industry, and the Wired Next Fest would be just another festival dedicated to innovation. It was the paper version that provided the relevance and made the other two business areas distinctive. So the print version was reworked and wasn't closed (today, it is a high-quality quarterly that has won many international awards), and, thanks to this decision, the brand today is seeing double-digit growth.

The transition from print to digital, or better yet, finding the right balance, is a complex issue and there aren't formulas that work under every circumstance.

As for *Vogue Italia*, thanks to the path laid out by Franca Sozzani during her tenure, we are in an excellent position. For years, the paper version has been the strong base for a complex system that includes a highly successful digital component, events and partnerships, along with platforms like Vogue Talents and Photo Vogue. Without this base, the system could not stand on its own, while the system itself brings back energy to the base as a part of a virtuous cycle.

When I'm asked why I think paper has a future, I don't talk about the wonderful tactile sensation (which certainly does count), nor do I talk about how neuroscience has shown that when one reads and looks at paper, there is a more lasting impact compared to scrolling on a screen. What I do speak about is the ability and the need to choose. To have a point of view, a voice in a physical environment with space that is limited, which forces us to choose what is and what isn't relevant, what really matters. In the end, being able to and knowing how to choose is freedom, for both those who write and those who read.

Penny Martin,
editor in chief, *The Gentlewoman*

Print can provide a rare source of pleasure that is completely uninterrupted by work.

Angelica Cheung,
editor-in-chief, *Vogue China*

Digital content is like beer, Coke and sparkling wine, which you drink on everyday occasions or at cocktails with a big crowd. You can have these parties often. But when you sit down for a formal and exclusive dinner with a select group of people, you want a glass of fine wine that you savour slowly. And that glass of fine wine is the print magazine.

Laura Brown,
editor in chief, *InStyle*

Print is your voice, print is your billboard. My attitude is: do you want to scroll mindlessly or do you want to be stopped by an image, a concept, or a plain old great read that arrests you, that makes you think, nay, dream? I know I do. And I live in the world: I got my job at *InStyle* not just because I can put a magazine together, but because of my presence on social media. Every editorial idea we have needs to have at least one adjunct in digital, be it an original video, extra content, or an exclusive, clever social post. And I think that's exciting, to be able to live out your ideas in 360º. At *InStyle*, our print product drives our greatest digital and social successes. So what is there to be afraid of?

Because there is a lot of fear in magazines right now, and that is squashing our most important thing: voice. If you're clinging to the revenue from the 20-page annual buy from an offensive designer or you 'have to' photograph fur, you're already losing. We don't work for our advertisers. They should need us as much as we need them. As I often say to my team, 'Business is like dating. Don't keep calling, and if you have a bad time, don't go back.' Either people are engaged with *InStyle*, and see how it's good for their business or they're not. Me going to sweet-talk a luxury executive for eight minutes at a cocktail party isn't going to change that. It's 2019 – not 1958.

'If I had a dollar for every PR pitch that ended with: Online is great, but we really want print.' Laura Brown, editor in chief, *InStyle*

Lastly, look at the digital powers that have launched a print magazine to cement themselves: Net-a-Porter with *Porter*, Business of Fashion with a biannual print issue. It makes me laugh that some of these platforms run clickbait about the death of print while at the same time printing a magazine.

Finally, if I had a dollar for every PR pitch that ended with, 'Online is great, but we really want print.'

Hey, so do I.

Nina Garcia,
editor in chief, *Elle* US

I have always been drawn to the curation that goes into creating a print product. I like to use a fashion analogy: digital is ready-to-wear; print is couture. They speak the same language and share the same DNA. Both are essential and complement one another, but a magazine requires a significant investment of attention and care on the part of the editors and the readers. Print is permanent and made to endure. I always say that a journalist with a print background has had amazing training as they have dived deep into the editing, researching, and fact-checking of a story. There is no 'delete' button; once the printed word is written, it lives on forever. It is a way to preserve our history. In an era of fake news, FOMO, an oversaturation of images, videos and stories, we know that real journalism always wins. The same goes for the quality and appreciation of a fashion editorial. The calibre of its photography and curated point of view will always inspire and transport us. It provides an unmatched sense of discovery, such as when you encounter an article you otherwise would not have pursued. Print is unchanging – it's meant to be enjoyed at a different pace. The digital sphere is hyperconnected and inexhaustible; the print experience is intimate, reflective, and focused. Print is connected to a new luxury – the luxury of time.

Stephen Gan,
editor in chief, *V Magazine* and *VMAN*

It is the responsibility of magazine editors to expand boundaries. In many cases, this means pushing them beyond the traditional paradigm of the printed page. Lately, this has meant experiential expansions on social media and online. However, in the world of *V*, we've always found it thrilling to design tangible sensory experiences for the print publication.

To bring V's 'Transformation Issue' to life, it incorporated lenticular material on its cover, allowing Penélope Cruz to blink at readers. Similarly, Lady Gaga's first *V* cover celebrated the singer's signature oversized sunnies with pull-and-peel Marc Jacobs glasses. Sure, there could be an app that could slap sunglasses on Lady Gaga's face, but there's nothing like being able to actually peel them off an issue. These moments offer something rare to the reader: they allow the audience to tangibly interact and engage with the content. The experience is literally lifted off the pages and into the hands of the consumer. The tactile aspect of each of these projects would not have come to life if we had explored them on an exclusively digital level.

Jefferson Hack,
editorial director, *Dazed* and *AnOther*

'For the Love of Print'

I remember many magazines – like markers – accompanying me through adolescence. The holographic cover of *National Geographic*, the 'Special Future Issue' of *Interview* with Tracey Ullman on the cover, and my guilty pleasure, *MAD* magazine, with its interactive fold-in back cover. But it wasn't until I got to London, aged 17, and started the student magazine *Untitled* with Rankin and Ian C. Taylor that I began making the pilgrimage to Tower Records in Piccadilly Circus to flick through the pages of *The Face*, *Maximum Rocknroll*, *Ray Gun* and *Mondo 2000*. It was the early 1990s, and that was the place to find the best imported magazines. The first drop of the new issues of *Interview* and *Vogue Italia* were an unmissable event for fashion and design students alike. It was a special kind of club.

I didn't realize at the time, but the reason I think I was so drawn to *Interview* was its graphic design: the paper was matt with a rough texture and smelled of deep tones of wood and ink. It was unusually large; I connected with it on a sensorial level. Q&A interviews were also my favourite format; they just weren't the formula du jour in the self-conscious dialectic of *NME*. I also loved the photography, the mix of extraordinary portraiture – the subjects becoming simultaneously

'Print can provide a rare source of pleasure that is completely uninterrupted by work.' Penny Martin, editor in chief, *The Gentlewoman*

irreverent and iconic. The covers that stand out are Laura Dern – a Stetson completely obscuring her face – as she crouches down to the ground, her name as a cover line printed upside down on the floor. A repentant looking Mike Tyson, his hands in prayer, wearing a towel as a nun's habit and a comic-looking John Lydon tugging his ears to the edges of the page, with cover lines radiating from his brain. There was humour, these were larger-than-life characters shot by some of the greatest image-makers like Herb Ritts and Bruce Weber.

I would later discover that these issues were the result of an explosive relationship between Ingrid Sischy and Tibor Kalman. For those who don't know her, Sischy was the incomparable editor who put Comme des Garçons on the cover of *Artforum* and who radically changed the art-fashion dialogue. A book of her essays, *Nothing is Lost*, was published recently, and it is a brilliant compendium. Tibor Kalman's contribution to magazine culture is less well documented. In the early days of *Dazed & Confused*, he encouraged and inspired me. Tibor headed up an influential graphic design agency, M&Co, and after a brief tenure at *Interview* became the driving force behind *COLORS*. Funded by Benetton (at a time when brands weren't invested in making editorial statements), *COLORS* was another revolutionary magazine where Tibor continued to break new ground. The Queen was Photoshopped to look ethnically black; a double-headed cow and an oil-slicked bird appeared in the ecology issue. *COLORS* looked at AIDS, race and religion. Tibor taught me that social consciousness and entertainment could be mixed.

'This Is Not A Magazine' I wrote on the cover of the first issue of *Dazed & Confused*. I understood early on, drawing on personal experience and my own position as a fan, that the best magazines are about physical communities as much as they are about communities of thought. The purpose of *Dazed & Confused* was to challenge conventional stereotypes and hierarchies with an outsider agenda that welcomed otherness; it allowed a new generation of talent to define its own reality.

'*AnOther Magazine*: another point of intervention, another set of discoveries, another way of looking at things, another 30 minutes of your time, another kiss, another curious idea that just came to mind, another reason to get out of bed in the morning, another sense of déjà vu, another chance to do it all over again next season. Another damn fine day.' So opened my editor's letter for the first issue of *AnOther Magazine* in 2001. If *Dazed* was about accelerating culture, then *AnOther* was about slowing it down, zooming in. It was a hybrid between a magazine and book. It felt like such a risk at the time, like all these things do, but its success shows that slowing down was exactly what its audience wanted at least when it came to fashion and culture in print.

Dazed, *AnOther* and *Another Man* have continued to thrive because of the power, impact and newsworthiness of their visual and editorial agendas. Their issue launches trigger mass commenting and sharing on social media as well as press coverage in newspapers and online. The images and ideas from print kickstart trends, inspire memes and often fuel critical debate that leads to a reorientation of public and popular opinion on many social and cultural issues.

Niche is the new currency, and being meaningful within a niche, or several niches simultaneously, is critical for media and brands alike. Alessandro Michele, Riccardo Tisci, J.W. Anderson and Kim Jones are examples of a new generation of designers who inherently understand that there is no mainstream anymore, just multiple concurrent streams.

Magazines like *Re-Edition*, *032c*, *Brick*, *Candy*, *Buffalo Zine*, *Kaleidoscope*, *gal-dem* and, of course, *System*, all share this luxury niche sensibility. Each issue is anticipated and celebrated by a specific community, by fans. It is about a relative scarcity, coupled with a highly focused editorial point of view – as opposed to scale and reach – that creates the 'must-have' effect for print. Idea Books has defined that mindset with its ALLCAPS bulletins announcing new issue drops. I recently ordered the 25th anniversary double issue of *Self Service* and regularly hit the 'I Want That' button for one-off print magazines and books on Idea's Insta-shop. It's deliciously addictive.

For a new generation of consumers who have grown up with digital media, print is, by its very nature, limited. The fans who e-mail Dazed Media every week for a copy of the Harry Styles issue of *AnOther Man* – now three years since it was published – are a testament to that. With 50 pages of images of Styles, conceived by Alister Mackie and shot by Ryan McGinley, Alasdair McLellan and Willy Vanderperre, the issue acts as the ultimate fan magazine. It costs an astounding £350 on eBay, a magazine resale value that eclipses even George Lois's seminal 1968 cover of Muhammad Ali for *Esquire*, which is a mere £190 in comparison.

Dazed Media's social channels are powerful but smaller print publishers, which make up for a lack of followers in counter-cultural currency. The power of the audience lies not in its size but its level of investment in a brand's point of view. I read somewhere that generational change happens when the industry is busy discussing disruption and, yes, businesses will crumble, media empires will fall, those that were heralded as the new avatars of publishing will disappear into the shadows. But those with a knack for understanding their audience will always make print work. Physically connecting – and digitally connecting – print audiences as if part of an exclusive club is key. From the very beginning of *Dazed & Confused*, we hosted parties, staged exhibitions, created happenings that were about community and bringing the magazine's ideas and the culture to life; we pioneered the idea that magazines could be participatory and open, and our digital channels have been essential in helping us continually redefine our relationship with our audience.

So what makes the physicality of a print magazine – especially a print magazine where photography, strong graphic design and high quality, long-form journalism are prized – so enduring, so appealing, so necessary today? If you've ever watched the documentary *Diana Vreeland: The Eye Has to Travel*, you will know. For Vreeland, there needed to be highs and lows within the unfolding linear narrative of a publication. Without this inherent 'drama', there is no emotional connection. 'We are a physical people,' she says, and the best fashion stories, magazine layouts, or 'flow' as we call it, all have a direct connection to our internal rhythm and our natural sense of our own physicality – entirely unlike the hyperspeed of digital's sensorial overload, where an emotional sensibility is forsaken for speed.

The image in today's digital media is atomized. There is also, as a result, no reference. Is it new, old, faked, authentic? Who is the author? Who contributed to the creation of the image? Are there more associated images that make a whole story? On social media there is no genuine way of knowing. The point of the image then is not its authorship, its affect, but purely its repurposing. On Instagram, the image is bootlegged into something new, something unintended and often abstracted. Very occasionally, on an author's own feed, there is an attempt to provide a frame of reference and authenticity through credits and tagging.

The landscape or double-page spread is a key format in magazine layout. The physical turning of the page also naturally gives pace to the flow. In magazine pages, the eye is travelling first class; on Instagram, the eye is in virtual free fall. While exhilarating, we simply don't experience images in the same way, with the same nuance and depth, like holding a magazine and flicking through the pages at high-speed, trying to take it all in at once. Fashion and art photography, portraiture, long-form journalism and social reportage may look amazing on specially designed screen-based browsers, but they are best in the context of a bound and printed magazine or book. This is collectable, a physical memory, a reference that endures. The best magazines live on coffee tables and are statements of identity when you come into someone's home; they are held by fans walking down the street, the magazine or its tote bag, symbols of identity and belonging. This is the enduring power of physical magazines as symbolic social signifiers.

I was looking through my archive of *Egoïste* magazines, at Avedon's cover portrait of Warhol's naked, scarred torso and the special gate-fold pullout of the Factory group inside. I have seen those images reproduced, life-sized, in many exhibitions. But if it wasn't for Nicole Wisniak, *Egoïste*'s founder, who commissioned them for her magazine, they wouldn't exist. The best magazines actively engage and create culture at a deep level. *Egoïste* is the source and the agency of those Avedon images. It is also, due to its context, the most authentic expression of the image, the issue itself a time capsule, with an ability to transport you back in time with immediate cultural context in the way an image on the wall at Gagosian cannot.

What we are witnessing now with a resurgence of independent print publications is the re-establishment of analogue media, a reinvention where explorations of certain values – the luxury of time, emotional connection, arcane knowledge and visual wonderment – are being launched continuously like beautiful fireworks, lighting up the sky, as

'Digital is ready-to-wear; print is couture. They speak the same language and share the same DNA.' Nina Garcia, editor in chief, *Elle* US

'*V* has incorporated lenticular material on its cover, allowing Penélope Cruz to blink at readers.' Stephen Gan, editor in chief, *V Magazine*

symbols of hope against a dark and corporately owned media landscape.

The smart creative directors at fashion brands have realized that niche is the new currency. Unlike corporations, fashion houses, including Prada, Celine, Balenciaga, Loewe, and Burberry, to name but a few, have strong creative leadership, their designers forensically involved in the creation of campaigns and their media placement. Luxury is in the business of selling the perceived values of quality, authenticity, creativity and a distinct mix of heritage and newness. The trend for multiple-page inserts, for special placements, for unique creative content to appear in different niche publications is, I believe, proof of a return to print. Its rarity and exclusivity affords a direct synergy with the codes of such brands. After all, the powerfully imaginative views that the most original independent magazines offer within the media landscape, is a luxury in itself. Hollywood, the ultimate dream factory, also trades in those same aspirations, valuing the covers of print magazines as some of the most valuable real estate in media for its stars. As Diana Vreeland reminded us: 'The dream is everything.'

I think of *PAPER* in the same way. It is exactly that, a blank canvas that is meant for all.

From a business perspective, the publishing business has seen a dramatic hit, there is no question about that. There are just more places for brands and business to put their money. SEO, banners, OOH, CRM, platforms, television, experiences. Digital has disrupted every business in the world, but only for the good. It is now about the fans more than ever. It is about being the brand that moves things left of the algorithm and creates culture. In a world of iteration, innovation will be the way forward.

Fans are the new customer, and if they want a printed magazine, I will have that for them. Again, we are here at the service of the fans: to entertain, educate, and include them.

Franck Durand,
editor in chief, *Holiday*

What are the current challenges that your printed magazine is facing?
Mainly protecting our independence.

'We've stopped thinking of ourselves as publishers; we are in the business of entertainment.' Drew Elliott, editor in chief, *PAPER*

Drew Elliott,
editor in chief, *PAPER*

I don't think that it is about print, digital, or social. Our jobs as publishers with a true point of view is to think about ideas and how to best distribute those ideas. An Instagram post could be as important as a cover; a fashion spread could be a better solution than a video; an event could be more powerful than a whole issue.

At *PAPER* we have stopped thinking of ourselves as publishers; we are in the business of entertainment. We are here for the fans and the Stans. Some fans want a printed magazine, others want to follow us on social and engage with us, and some want to have it brought to life through experiential.

True artists have no medium, they have a point of view, and they reflect that in their work. This is as true historically as it is today. Imagine if da Vinci had been told he could only paint or Murakami that he could only make sculptures. Imagine Pharrell as just a musician, or Cher as only an actress. Creative people and brands make work and then find the best ways to connect their ideas to audiences who will enjoy them.

What purpose does print have today, now that digital media has become the norm?
The power of print is obviously its capacity to provide an actual object. It comes with a sort of pleasure, a sensation that remains unique and necessary.

In what ways has the digital revolution forced you to reconsider your print magazine's financial model?
The magazine is sold all over the world, but in specialist places we choose. *Holiday* has targeted its audience, which is smaller and feels like being part of a clan, a village, a family.

In what ways is your relationship with your advertising clients changing?
The format and the printing are the two biggest assets for our advertisers, and without being modest, they are quite beautiful with *Holiday*. Our readership of influencers is also an added value, and not forgetting, of course, the text and images.

Why do you think people continue to buy print magazines?
If a certain part of the press is set to disappear, there's room

for more tribal versions. There's real territory to be occupied by the more exacting titles. After all, television didn't replace radio. On the contrary, it's stronger than ever. And I don't think that the Internet means the end of printed paper.

What do you think your readership expects from your magazine?
The feedback is great because it shows how we go straight to the heart of what's pleasurable in opening a magazine: the wait, and frustration (we only publish two issues a year); the surprise (a different destination every time); the quality content (images as much as text); the quality of the texts that can be read now, in three weeks' time or next summer; the desire to collect them.

In which ways can print engage your readers that your digital channels cannot?
Our digital policy is very minimal. For each issue we only post a dozen texts and images. We are committed elsewhere.

Since the invention of the printing press, media technologies have shifted continually, yet reading on paper hasn't become extinct. Why will print never die?
There'll always be a pleasure, a culture, a gesture, a ceremony, a smell and a moment closely linked to paper. They might be rarer, but they're not ready to disappear. Not yet anyway.

Christoph Amend,
editor in chief, *ZEITmagazin*

You want to know why print is beautiful? You already know the reason. You're holding it in your hands right now.

Nick Haramis,
editor in chief, *Interview*

I used to think that there were stories for magazines and stories for the Internet. Magazines ran articles that were considered and researched and painstakingly put together. The Internet was a place for funny lists and rankings, but mostly pornography. It's near impossible for the editor of a print publication to talk about the Internet without sounding 7,000 years old, and yet, the unavoidable reality is that print-only publications are rarely sustainable. The ones that are surviving have realized that the print-digital divide is a construct rooted in some sort of weird paper-loving snobbery, and that to stay relevant we need to deliver our stories to readers across every platform they use to consume them. It's pretty simple, to be honest. We're in the business of telling stories through words and pictures, no matter the medium.

That said, I do love a magazine. It's not so much about the tactility that print editors often use to justify their work. Nobody, if they're being honest, wants to carry around a cumbersome magazine. It's about needing an excuse to turn away from my desktop or laptop or iPad or phone. There are so many great things that are specific to consuming media on the Internet: the immediacy of the news cycle, the rabbit hole of content into which you can descend, the option to hear audio or watch video to supplement the experience of reading. But I miss the design of a printed page online. I miss seeing a full-bleed image across a two-page spread. (I love soaking in a photograph so much, in fact, that we've returned to the trim size of *Interview* in the mid-1980s, when the only thing bigger than the magazine was the hair.)

It's not that one is better than the other, it's that I use them differently. I read online journalism to keep up on what's happening in the world, or to find out who went home on *The Bachelor.* In that way, as a consumer of digital content, I'm an active participant. With magazines, though, I want to be the passive one. I want their editors to lead me.

'There'll always be a pleasure, a culture, a gesture, a ceremony, and a smell closely linked to paper.' Franck Durand, editor in chief, *Holiday*

Jay Fielden,
editor in chief, US *Esquire*

What are the current challenges your magazine is facing?
I saw *First Man* recently, which really brought home how difficult it was to get a man on the moon. The whole time I was thinking, 'O.K., if they could do that, surely we can figure out the new business model for magazine publishing, right?' The challenges, in other words, are of an order that is otherworldly. It's all men and women to their battle stations every day.

What purpose does print have today, now that digital media has become the norm?

Print has to be well reported, written, edited, and argued. The ultimate goal in print is to publish things a reader will want to read more than once, look at more than once. That's a totally different frame of mind to digital.

In which ways has the digital revolution forced you to reconsider the financial model of your print magazine?
Put simply, we have to do more with less. It's a way of working that can lead to great creativity and a speedier evolution. Parameters can focus you, limitations can act like muses, no can be a positive. Digital is the new bright shiny object, but print is the object of power and awe it's always been. You take it away or screw it up and, in most cases, all you'll have left is a handful of dust.

In what ways is your relationship with your advertising clients changing?
It's better than ever because we can do more collaboratively than ever before. We can do the epic shoot that has the shelf-life of paper; we can do the smart quick hit that gets shot into the ether of social media; we can do video, podcasts, live events. I mean, come on, if I were an advertiser in *Esquire*, I'd buy it all.

Why do you think people continue to buy print magazines?
I don't know! I'm not sure we knew why they bought them in 1926 either, really. The magazine is one of the greatest human inventions ever. Good ones are simply irresistible. They make life more interesting and fun. My phone is trying to convince me it can do that, too, but it can't really. It's too busy distracting me, never letting me quite get that feeling of total absorption outside of time that very few things can. A magazine can.

What does your readership want from a print magazine?
That thing each month that only *Esquire* can be; it shouldn't look or feel or sound like anything else. And it shouldn't necessarily give you what you think it should. *Esquire* has a strong contrarian streak, and I think that's especially good for the moment we're in.

Are you as much of a print-magazine consumer as before?
I am. I just dig magazines. Always have.

Which print title feels relevant within the predominantly digital landscape?
The ones about looking or reading or – as in the case of *Esquire* – both. You can do both of those things on the Internet, but they're not as enjoyable as they are in print. The good fashion magazines will always be in print, as will the magazines that publish writing of book-like quality. The pretenders to those two thrones – and there is a bewildering plenitude of them – will, on the other hand, probably bite the dust pretty soon. I'd add to that that, as Harold Hayes, one of *Esquire*'s legendary editors, once said: 'A successful magazine has to build a myth its readers can believe in.' You practically have to be a cult, in other words, and now more than ever.

Since the invention of the printing press, media technologies have shifted continually, yet reading on paper hasn't become extinct. Why will print never die?
Print is superior in so many ways. It's easier to read; you can mark your progress; you can make notes and scribbles; circle words you don't know; tear things out. And when you're done, it becomes a visual reminder – in a pile, in a folder, on a shelf – of the information you digested. In all these ways, print lends itself ingeniously to the activity it represents. Its elegant design – the codex, invented so long ago! – has some kind of magical, brain-bewitching power.

Holly Shackleton,
former global editor in chief, *i-D*

I believe that print is as important as ever, but the era of monthly magazines has to change. A fashion magazine akin to a coffee-table book, that you treasure, might be a cliché, but it's a far better cliché than throwing your subscription in the recycling bin each month. Magazines no longer need to cover news or shopping pages, this is what the internet is for; instead, they should exist as an aspirational object, whether that's a scrappy fanzine or a slick glossy; something to invest in, that inspires you, a work of art, a marker in time. To do this they need a point of difference, their own winning formula of fashion and journalism. They need to address the talking points of our times, while also pushing the conversation forward. For magazines to work in harmony with digital, they need to prove their worth, they need to be aspirational and they need to make you dream.

At *i-D*, we think of print as the window to our world; the pinnacle of what we do across photography, styling, design and journalism. Digital is the faster, more irreverent but just as vital younger sibling, who's quick to join conversations and offer the *i-D* point of view. Two sides of the same coin, that couldn't exist without the other, but together make a whole.

From an industry point of view, I sometimes worry that we are in an age of creating magazines for the instant gratification of Instagram. Does it matter that you haven't actually held the physical copy of a new issue in your hands if you've seen every image and watched the behind-the-scenes shoot, interview and 'making of' on Instagram? Which leads me to question whether social media is the real future of digital publishing after all?

Angelo Cirimele,
editor in chief, *Magazine*

What does your readership want from your print magazine?
Probably ideas and ways to see things, to question and maybe be critical, in texts and images.

Why do you think people continue to buy print magazines?
I think the digital memory that the cloud offers is quite different to that built by magazines. Keeping a magazine is archiving a context, not only the series or the text that made us buy it. And when we look at old magazines, we often notice things that seemed meaningless when we bought them. The images on Instagram are out of any context and don't allow any understanding other than like or don't.

Are you as much of a print-magazine consumer as before?
Of course not. The Internet and Instagram are much more powerful if you want to check the zeitgeist in, for instance, the creative field. But if you don't want only the ingredients but the cooked dish, you'd better look at the layout and the series that are before and after.

Which print title feels relevant in this new digital landscape?
Pop and *Double* for their fresh and strong approach; *The Gentlewoman* because it doesn't look like any other; and *Cos* because it is more intelligent than many sold magazines.

Since the invention of the printing press, media technologies have shifted continually, yet reading on paper hasn't become extinct. Why will print never die?
Print is a process that allows collective intelligence. Photographers are not the best art directors and their pictures often get stronger with real art direction. If we consider the final reader, print offers a break from our devices and the continuous interruptions that e-mails and likes and comments represent. Reading is an action; a like is a reaction. Besides, Instagram may not be the place for complex thinking. Print is the place for imperfection (misprint, colours not always 100% controlled) and you can't fix it. You can feel the human hand behind – and not the algorithm.

Chris Vidal Tenomaa,
editor in chief and creative director, *SSAW*

I cannot be objective in answering this question as print is so close to my heart and my love for fashion is fundamentally rooted in all the magazines I bought as a teenager in the early 1990s. At the time, magazines were the only way to be informed and to know anything about what was happening in the mysterious world of fashion. Now it's all dramatically changed, information is very accessible and yes, digital can be great for many things such as speed and immediacy, but what it cannot be is tactile, fleshy, emotional and real. Magazines, like books, still provide us with a tangible object that can be informative, practical, stylish and beautiful. I still have all the magazines I bought more than 20 years ago, and I continue to buy new and vintage magazines all the time because they bring me a lot of joy, which is at least one thing digital cannot do. I think both print and digital can be great in their own way, but if I had to compare them, it would be like comparing a real kiss with a virtual one. We all know which one is better.

Dylan Jones,
editor in chief, British *GQ*

Print is about trust. About expertise. About transparency. The

'It's near impossible for a magazine editor to talk about the Internet without sounding 7,000 years old.' Nick Haramis, editor in chief, *Interview*

'We think of print as the pinnacle of what we do across photography, styling, design and journalism.' Holly Shackleton, former global editor in chief, *i-D*

brand I am the co-custodian of appears in many forms: we are a monthly print magazine that is also available as an app; we are a website that is updated every 10 minutes; we produce a biannual fashion magazine; we have a full-service social team; we host at least a dozen annual top-flight events. But print is still at the heart of what we do. Why would it not be?

At the moment I think we are beginning to see that people are starting to distrust 'the Internet' as a source of news. Obviously for the last 10 years we've been told that digital content aggregation ('hosting' content that has been paid for by other people) is the future, but there are green shoots that suggest otherwise. Just look at the sales figures and the increased revenue success of the *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times* or the *Economist*, just look at the success the *Guardian* is having with its begging-bowl policy, just look at the way in which Facebook and Google have become digital pariahs, huge media monoliths that people don't appear to trust any more.

There is beginning to be an understanding that if you want rigorously discussed and debated stories that have been rigorously commissioned, rigorously researched and written, rigorously fact-checked and edited, rigorously subedited, rigorously designed and displayed, then you are going to have to pay for it. Journalists cost money. Researchers cost money. As do designers, fact checkers, subeditors, features editors. As the old saying goes, you get what you pay for.

Even online.

Paul Kominek,
editor in chief, *The Travel Almanac*

What purpose does print have in 2019, now that digital media has become the norm?
Print still has the power to bring authenticity and acclaim to whatever subject or personality is being presented in a more impactful way than digital media can. The notion that print stories need to go through a potentially more thorough selection process is still very much alive and rightly so.

In which ways has the digital revolution forced you to reconsider your print magazine's financial model?
It hasn't forced us to reconsider, but rather enabled us to pursue digital ideas. The development in digital media opens new opportunities for established print-media titles. A few years ago, making money with online content seemed ambitious and investing in digital-only content and technology was difficult to justify. The acceptance and shift towards digital makes it easier to build on an existing print platform.

Have you found that your editorial tone or direction is changing to suit the digital era?
Only to the extent that developments arising from a digital context play into the material we consider for both print and digital features. We cover what has been, is, and will be relevant to us and our readers, which of course, increasingly includes online-born topics.

Why do you think people continue to buy print magazines?
Beyond the fact that you get a thoroughly curated periodical and in the best case, a beautiful object, I think people view print publications more and more like brands they identify with. The more distinctive the curation and editing, the more you can differentiate yourself from other titles and create a platform that your readers associate with. And it is easier to show off this association with the presence of a physical object in your life than a link to a webpage. There's also a big potential for extending a print title's core ideas and aesthetics into a wider reaching ecosystem of physical products and projects.

Yann Weber,
editor in chief and creative director, *Antidote*

In the 'long' term, news magazines won't be able to resist; digital does it better, faster and cheaper. Quarterly and biannual 'niche' magazines (about fashion, art, design, culture) will still have a strong card to play. We're going to buy magazines like vinyls, fewer of them but better quality. The future of print means doing something exclusive that deserves to be collected or published as a limited edition. If not, bye.

Mikel Benhaim,
co-founder, *King Kong*

Even though digital seems like it's taking over, print truly remains triumphant because it's been the same since the beginning. We see our magazine as a collector's item.

I loved magazines growing up but these days most of them look the same, so we took a conscious decision to make sure the teen me would want to buy *King Kong* by making every issue of *KK* different. We never repeat ourselves, just reinvent.

The challenges we face are a double-edged sword because we can do whatever we want! But this doesn't make advertising clients happy. You have to just decide which road to go down and we choose to keep our creative integrity.

When we started *King Kong* a few years ago, we wanted to create an entirely new space, which would be a platform for artists to feel free to experiment and take the risks that were deemed too commercially dangerous at more established publications.

We wanted it to marry together art and fashion in an organic way that I hadn't found in existing publications. Whenever fashion magazines attempted to include an element of pure art, the result felt like tokenism as the artists were not given enough space to expand on their work and vice versa, with fashion stories sandwiched into highbrow art magazines. I think we have redressed this balance very successfully. Thanks to our narrative structure, we have woven together artists with their fashion counterparts based on thematic elements, rather than simply separating them as 'art' and 'fashion'.

The magazine itself is such a hefty object that hopefully it encourages the reader to take a moment to slow down, and be carried along on the journey. As we are working, I am acutely aware that there will be six months until the next chapter in the story arrives, so each issue has to be rich enough in detail and hidden surprises to keep people fascinated until then, and keep them continually coming back and discovering more. The real pleasure of publishing biannually is that we are freed from reporting on trends and able to create something timeless.

The flip side is that digital allows us to discover people quicker and give them a platform to showcase their work.

At a certain point, people can become numbed to new talent and original modes of expression. Rather than people finding us, we are constantly searching for new, underground talent in order to develop their work and give them a platform, with the long term aim of democratizing art and fashion, for the benefit of both artists and consumers. *King Kong* only exists because we genuinely believe there's so much talent out there and we want to discover them and give them a voice. It's so rewarding.

Claudia Donaldson,
editor in chief, *Cloakroom*

What are the challenges your print magazine is facing?
Cash flow – the thrill of tying a ribbon on a launch issue doesn't last if you haven't figured out how to pay for the next one.

What is print's purpose in 2019?
The same as it always has – to tell a great story.

In what ways is your relationship with your advertising clients changing?
Issue one is on the newsstands in October, so we don't have form yet! The success we've had with advertising so far is credited to my time at NOWNESS. Although the majority of brands are video first, there's a generation who now consider print a relevant, modern way of connecting with its audience. They understand it better than they did before; they're more sophisticated in their storytelling; and they're more willing to invest in collaborating editorially, in print, to tell a better story.

Why do you think people continue to buy print magazines?
There's a contract between reader and editor that for many is a relationship forged in their teens. It goes beyond writing or images and is based on the intimacy evoked when you're fully immersed. It's also a shared experience, usually on an aeroplane with my husband, where we read interview excerpts to one another or point out pictures.

Are you as much of a print-magazine consumer as you used to be?
I bought a lot of magazines about 18 months ago before I decided to do my own – that's basic due diligence. As a

'The future of print means doing something exclusive that deserves to be collected. If not, bye.' Yann Weber, editor in chief, *Antidote*

'As the old saying goes, you get what you pay for. Even online.' Dylan Jones, editor in chief, British *GQ*

process it reminded me of how my habits have changed. I used to buy so many! Magazines were a religion. Now I buy a few, regularly, because I like their point of view; ones whose writers I want to read consistently or where I know I'm likely to find pictures that make me stop and think. Then the voice changes and if I don't like it, I move on. I'm pretty fickle.

Jo Barker and Eddie Eldrige,
founders, *Re-Edition*

Breaking a magazine down to bits on Instagram and digital websites does not convey the magazine physically as a whole. The experience is only a small piece of the entire experience.

It does not give the entire picture; it's fragmented. It's like seeing a review about an art exhibition or film clip, without going to see the exhibition or film.

The magazine needs to be seen physically on the paper bound container – and its full glory – to understand visually and appreciate its contents. Magazines can be something to keep, store and treasure – they have a physical beauty. A magazine's Instagram account only exists because the print magazine has made it! You couldn't really have it the other way round, it would not have the same value. Instagram is a tool to promote the magazine, advertise it, and have conversations with readers and audience in between print times, so it facilitates the magazine. It raises awareness of the magazine, like the digital platform and website; it helps the magazine, advertising the print version. But the container needs to be physical, you need to touch it.

Plenty of magazines today express this exciting full experience, us, *System*, *i-D, Dazed, Arena Homme+*, *The Gentlewoman*, and *Modern Matter*, to name a few are all exciting containers, brimming with exciting visuals and must-read interviews.

Huw Gwyther, editorial director,
Visual Talent, publishers of *Wonderland*, *Man About Town* and *Rollacoaster* magazines.

What can print do that digital cannot?
Print is relaxing and stress-free to read or consume. Personally, I don't find digital relaxing or stress-free a lot of the time. Most of us associate digital with work; flicking through a magazine at a calm and leisurely pace is not work; for most people, it is an affordable and accessible luxury.

What are the current challenges that your print magazine is facing?
Obviously the decline in the volume of traditional print advertising is 'the' big challenge most print publishers face, but luckily I love a challenge, and there are plenty of new and exciting opportunities out there.

What purpose does print have in 2019?
Print magazines are in some ways an antidote to the instantaneousness of digital content, something a lot of people, myself included, still crave.

In what ways has the digital revolution forced you to reconsider the financial model of your print magazine?
We have had to work harder than ever, and adapt faster, but this means no day is ever dull or boring, at least. We are learning new skills every single day, and making plenty of mistakes too, which is also OK, as long as you learn from them!

In which ways is your relationship with your advertisers changing?
It's becoming even better, closer, more personal, deeper, more supportive, more mutually respectful and beneficial, and also more rewarding both creatively and financially.

Is your editorial tone or direction changing to suit the digital era?
Choosing content that is 'shareable' is certainly a factor editorially in the wake of the digital revolution, as is the way interviews are conducted. For example, questions (and sometimes interviews) will be centred around the digital, and people we feature who we have found on Instagram would perhaps have been missed before.

Why do you think people continue to buy print magazines?
Curiosity. We are all naturally curious to learn about new things and people as well as discover more about things and people we already have an interest in. There is still a longing for a break from the instant nature of digital content that makes print magazines ever-relevant. People live with magazines over days, weeks and months in a manner that is simply not possible with digital content or social media.

What do you think your readership wants or expects from your print magazine?
Creative excellence, but also consistency and a clear voice and editorial identity.

In which ways can print engage your readers that your digital channels cannot?
Visually, print makes more of a statement than small, ephemeral images seen on social media, and this certainly engages readers. Likewise, the long-form style of article that is becoming rarer online keeps readers engaged for longer.

Are you as much of a print-magazine consumer as before?
No, very intentionally – I don't want my decisions to be influenced by what other magazines are doing. I trust my gut instinct now and I know what I want and is right for our publications. I don't want to be put off doing something I want to do just because I see something similar in some other magazine. So I focus 100% on our own magazines – and they are better for it, I think.

Which print title feels like a relevant proposition in 2019?
One magazine I do read every week is London's (free) *ES*, edited by Laura Weir; I think she does an absolutely brilliant job. It might not be considered particularly 'cool' by some (perhaps because it is free and also reaches a huge number of people) – but it is influential, in London at least, and I have never been particularly bothered about being perceived as 'cool'!

Marie-Amélie Sauvé,
editorial and creative director, *Mastermind*

Digital media offers readers fast, easy access to information, but the sheer volume is overwhelming and much of it is garbage and shallow. People are so tired of being bombarded with information that they take digital detoxes as if online content is a poison and they need to be purified. I get the sense this is linked to a growing fatigue in our culture. People no longer read past a headline or the news alerts they get on their phones. Nowadays time is the new luxury – being able to take a break from the digital cacophony and dwell in a story or a fashion editorial. I founded *Mastermind* in 2017, well into the 'digital revolution' to offer people a reprieve – a point of view that cuts through the noise.

I have also noticed that print demands more from readers. They cannot access it anywhere; they have to find a physical copy and then pay for it. But they do so because *Mastermind* offers them a reading experience they cannot find anywhere else. I have always found it more satisfying to read from a physical object and to feel the paper. Our readers recognize that turning a page is different than scrolling down a computer screen. Print is also a marker of taste: magazine readers want something deeper and more luxurious than online offerings.

Arby Li,
editor in chief, *HYPEBEAST*

What are the challenges your print magazine is facing?
Probably similar to those the print realm is facing as a whole: the challenge of competing with digital platforms where access to information is faster and arguably more convenient. It's a great challenge to take on as it forces us to think outside the box and constantly evolve to provide a better product with stories that cannot be interpreted digitally or are more powerful to have in physical form.

What is print's purpose in 2019, now that digital media has become the norm?
The beauty of print is also in the fact that once something is published, it cannot be edited or modified so everything has to be perfect. Furthermore, knowledge is positioning itself as the new form of 'cultural currency', allowing people to be associated to something they desire. In the same way that wearing a particular brand was once the biggest signifier of your interests or an expression of personality.

How has the digital revolution forced you to reconsider your print magazine's financial model?

'In magazine pages, the eye is travelling first class; on Instagram, the eye is in virtual free fall.' Jefferson Hack, co-founder, *Dazed* and *AnOther*

'Magazines are such hefty objects that hopefully they encourage readers to take a moment to slow down.' Mikel Benhaim, co-founder, *King Kong*

The *HYPEBEAST* print magazine came several years after the launch of the website and social-media platforms, which allowed us to approach it almost as a passion project. We treat it as a vessel of communication to educate readers in the same way that certain stories are more powerful told through social media or digital platforms. Our print magazine was developed in the midst of the digital revolution so we haven't been forced to reconsider the model. We are just always aiming to improve it, whether the content, accessibility or model.

In what ways is your relationship with your advertisers changing?
In the same way that digital media is a constant evolution, advertising clients will always expect you to be ahead of the curve and come up with meaningful and creative ways of portraying their stories.

Have you found your editorial tone or direction changing to suit the digital era?
It's less about the editorial tone or direction changing and more the platforms used to communicate. Of course, there will always be differences in how content is displayed; for example, it might not be as effective to showcase a lengthy text article on a platform such as Instagram, but the question is how can that article be adapted into a different form so the message isn't lost or diluted?

What do you think your readership wants or expects from your print magazine?
While we have both long-form and short-form content on our digital platforms, we tend to dive deeper into stories for our print magazine as it lives forever physically. Looking back on all the issues, we've always tried to distil what the biggest cultural moments are in a particular period amid the fast-paced nature of the modern world.

In what ways can print engage your readers that your digital channels cannot?
The fact that you physically own a copy of the print magazine is already a big differentiation, but it's also about capturing the attention of a reader more fully. As it's something you purchase, the reader will probably be more likely to invest a higher level of engagement in consuming a story and develop a deeper understanding.

Which print title feels relevant today?
I'm looking forward to seeing what visvim's *Subsequence* magazine will be like when it launches; more so in terms of how it serves as an extension to a brand and its lifestyle component. Visvim is one of those rare brands where you're not just merely a fan of the label, but you're interested in the whole lifestyle it portrays, so seeing how this particular product ties in will be interesting. Even the way they've teased how the pages will be bound by saddle stitching is very visvim, like how its website 'dissertations' explain the intricate processes of construction for their garments.

Adrian Gonzalez-Cohen and David Uzquiza,
founders, *Buffalo Zine*

We are quite interested, even obsessed, with digital, social media, even VR, but at the end of the day we are material. Physical. We need contact, touch, talk, and also baking powder, forks, tables, washing-up liquid. We live in a material world. There's a certain type of magazine, like the one we do, that is an object like a good candle or a plant or a bunch of flowers. It gives you a physical experience. It's an object with a beginning and an end, that has been edited for you. In the digital dimension you have to do the edit yourself, so you have fewer opportunities to discover new languages or narratives.

Editing is an author's vision. One of our biggest fears about the digital revolution is losing storytelling. Even if we don't think it will disappear completely, something will eventually happen.

Photographers now are less worried about their stories as a whole; they only care about single images, because they're going to be seen in isolation and independently on the internet. The whole concept is quite shallow. There's not much poetry. It will eventually change as a reaction.

Magazines used to be channels of information, trends, diffusion. You can't compete with digital for that, that's why magazines that were about information and current subjects are disappearing.

The print we still defend is not about trends, and in our specific case, in *Buffalo* the pretension is to be as timeless as a novel or a scent. *Buffalo* wants to be a good and affordable gift, wrapped in gift paper, and destined to sit on a coffee table, in a waiting room, on a shelf.

Brands should be aware that nearly everyone – the photographers, stylists, beauty artists, models and so on – who they use in their campaigns and shows comes from independent publishing. I believe advertising in those publications should be something these brands have to do as an ethical obligation, regardless of the benefits, the same way they pay attention to sustainability. It's another type of sustainability.

Masoud Golsorkhi,
editor in chief, *TANK*

'The invention of the car did not mean the extinction of the horse – but it did mean finding a new role for horses.' By now, we have all heard this analogy applied to print and digital, but I'm not so sure. Sometimes easy analogies can be misleading. Yes, many people are returning to physical media – for example, vinyl has found a new audience even with MP3s and the digitalization of music – but old patterns of consuming music are unlikely in new context: the gym won't accommodate turntables. In the same way, many magazines have begun to resemble coffee-table books, and indeed, both books and vinyl can exist in the same limited, but marginalized way that horses fit in modern society. An eccentric luxury for the hobbyist. For me, the format, whether print or digital, is a side issue, less important than the business model that pays for and defines the nature of the content it carries.

Distributing information by printing it on a piece of paper may no longer be viable as it can be distributed cheaper and faster digitally, but at the cost of quality control and editorial oversight. 'Information wants to be free' is the biggest lie ever told. Knowledge may deserve to be freely accessible, yes, but information is a manufactured product and it turns out you can't have a free lunch after all. The big tech platforms, Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix and Google – expressed as a perfect acronym, FAANG – have grown to be as greedy, monopolistic and pig-headed as any *Citizen Kane*-style press baron and equally as corrosive to democracy. Businesses fed on the early flushes of freemium are going to find the price of reaching audiences is going inflate and quickly; the cost of online customer acquisition will be – if it isn't already – comparable to that of getting shoppers to walk in to your store on Oxford Street or Fifth Avenue.

What the digital information revolution is doing to the image is less frequently considered, but might be having a more profound effect. Digital distribution means the end of photography as the favourite medium of consumerism. Digital images are distributed in such a way that neither their context nor their exact quality or integrity can be controlled. Yet the decline in the potency of the image might turn out to be an opportunity rather than a threat for magazines that also do written words well. Future magazines could have an edge over other more immediate forms of media by being deliberate and slow. They are more effective by the quality of ideas expressed with quality writing. Print magazines that are no longer effective as sources of information can, and are, re-emerging as powerful packagers of complex and considered ideas, often in long form capable of creating long-lasting impression and changing lives. Taking the messy chaos and confusion of the world and moulding it into comprehensive narrative form turns out to be what magazines are perfectly suited at doing. It's their superpower.

Print can in every respect, including its environmental and energy footprint, compete with digital as a means of delivering what is a deep human need for stories. A print magazine can narrate, like no other medium, especially when it is valued and paid for by its readers. One thousand paying subscribers for a magazine will be worth more than 10 million roving eyeballs on a website. The continued success of magazines like the *New Yorker* and *Private Eye*, and many new recent launches in the same vein point that way. Fashion will wake up to that… eventually.

David Martin,
editor in chief and creative director, *ODDA*

What are the current challenges that your print magazine is facing?
I feel the challenges *ODDA* is facing today are the same ones I have faced since I launched the magazine in 2012, which are, basically, never leave things for granted, enjoy making a

'Comparing print and digital is like comparing a real kiss with a virtual one. We all know which is best.' Chris Vidal Tenomaa, editor in chief, *SSAW*

'Advertising in independent publications should become an ethical obligation for brands.' Adrian Gonzalez-Cohen & David Uzquiza, *Buffalo Zine*

magazine like *ODDA* every single day, and be totally open for anything that may arise. Probably the biggest challenge is never to lose perspective that digital is only positive and a good complement to the print.

In what ways has the digital revolution forced you to reconsider the financial model of your print magazine?
Changes in the advertising models between print and digital are a beneficial way of making fashion more diverse and strong and the industry more dynamic and sustainable than others. I think it's a way of forcing talents to be more creative, and develop things people want to see now versus things we create to be in the market for six months, which people keep looking at for years or decades. One thing is *now* and the other one is *forever*. I'm not saying this focus on digital is easy; it is a change you have to adapt to and understand.

Why do people continue to buy print magazines?
If a print magazine is worth it, then it is a message for forever on your table, a gift, a never-ending source of inspiration for the future.

Tyler Brûlé,
editor in chief, *Monocle*

What are some of the current challenges your print magazine is facing?
The current challenge is that the entire chain – or, the system – is broken. Once upon a time, you had a publishing company that believed in the product, either big or small, and the owners, the CEO, the publishers, the editors, all believed in print. Today, you have a series of disparate visions inside companies where some apologize for print: 'Oh well, we still have a magazine, but we're digital first, yet the print can make all of the money.' And that causes grumpiness in the building. That's one problem. Then you have a distributor that has its own deadline, a slightly out-of-date way of working, so you have to get from the printer to the kiosk, and that's a problem. And then you have a kiosk which, of course, doesn't get the same level of investment that it might once have received from Condé Nast, the *Financial Times*, or Hearst. They would buy posters, and there were some incremental revenues to also promote those titles. I would go to them and say, 'You know what,

'One thousand paying subscribers will be worth more than 10 million roving eyeballs on a website.' Masoud Golsorkhi, editor in chief, *TANK*

In what ways can print engage your advertisers that your digital channels cannot?
Print advertising is the best way to justify an investment as it's placed where the client – brand or person – wants, in the position they want, and how they want, without a third person deciding how's it's going to be displayed.

Which print title feels relevant in 2019's predominantly digital landscape?
Self Service, *AnOther*, *The Gentlewoman*, *Fantastic Man*, *Arena Homme+*, *Dazed*, *System*, *Purple*, *Pop*, to just name a few without any doubt. It's also interesting to see what big titles, like American *Vogue* and *Vogue Italia*, are doing as they shape fashion in one way or another.

Why will print never die?
A lot of young people I've been meeting lately are more and more into paper, identity, past pleasures and going into the future without losing values, and the beauty of the details. Many even refuse to have an iPhone or Instagram. Digital platforms are a 'now' thing, not a forever thing.

it would look great if you had a *Vogue* or a *Monocle* awning on the outside of your kiosk!' And what do they do then? Shelf space is reduced to make more room for Pringles, Diet Coke and Milka bars. And that is probably the critical part of the challenge at the moment. There are only a few places for people to sample print and experience titles; there are fewer places to acquire new readers, whether they're further up the food chain or people who love magazines and have grown up with magazines. But where do you bring in new people? Where does a 23-year-old fall in love with print? Once upon a time, that relationship could have started at a WHSmith. That can't happen anymore because the offer has been so reduced. I think that is the challenge that all of us face at the moment. Some are willing to put up a fight, others are retreating.

What is the purpose of print in 2019, now that digital has become the norm?
There's been a digital-first wave, and we've been living that wave for a long time. I really feel that 2018 was a good marker of the way things are going. At *Monocle*, we saw print advertising grow last year, and what's happening is that titles are

really committed to print, to doing it well; they are conscious of the paper stock that is between the reader's fingers, the quality of the print product that comes off the presses, the types of stories that are commissioned, what works well with paper. And those people can sometimes migrate over to digital. If we are going to do something wonderful on paper, let's make sure it's a long read; let's make sure it's something that can't really be replicated. The main thing is digital real estate: we do not have, and there is not, a digital equivalent of magazines right now. We have to accept the fact that people are consuming content on small screens. There are opportunities available, and many of them are where digital simply can't compete. There's been a reticence, because you think, 'Oh well, you can animate it, you can do this or that with a mobile device or a tablet, and therefore, it's far superior.' But with some smart heads around our desk and on the editorial floor, you can bring compelling concepts to the clients. I can only speak from *Monocle*'s experience, but we've just done a huge project with BMW, which wanted – speaking very much from an advertiser's point of view – something with an editorial perspective. If I go and ask an agency to go and shoot

digital does not deliver. We know with half of these companies, we could say, 'Well, we can buy traffic.' But how can you say that? It's almost become accepted that some clicks can be bought. Since when is that acceptable? Everyone has come to the point as well that it's unacceptable. I always come back to, 'Who's ever been to the launch of a website?'

Are you finding your editorial tone or direction is changing to suit the digital era?
That's a very timely question. I've seen a lot of digital things move into print. Like print-and-page art direction by Instagram – single image, small caption, single image, small caption, again and again and again, with no sensitivity to the fact that when you have an A4- or A5-sized magazine, you have to celebrate this great expanse that you have. So why not create an amazing grid, why not use the luxury of the spread? All the things that the printed page allows you to do, both vertically and horizontally, which you simply can't do on a screen? This vertical digital format, this single-image-caption-world is starting to infect a lot of things. At the moment we're working on a custom publishing project and trying to educate our

'I always come back to the same thing: Who's ever been to the launch of a website?' Tyler Brûlé, editor in chief, *Monocle*

my car, I get something that is super CGI manipulated. If I ask magazine editors to do that, they're not going to come up with a CGI solution. They can't afford it. It's also just not the DNA of an art desk. The vehicle and their story will be told in a commercial format, but through an editorial lens. What's really exciting for them is that there is a booklet at the end of it. It's something that people can flip through, that they're able to linger on. That is something print delivers.

It is for high-value items, of course, with an expensive price tag, and there is that moment of wanting a catalogue value of something. Of course, somewhere in the management chain of many companies, people also think, 'It's just easier if we send a PDF or a web link to somebody.'

It is something that has been forgotten, so you have to remind brands that it's something really important, but that's where our conversation is moving towards. The conversation three years ago was, 'What's your social strategy? What are you doing on social?' Last October, I was in a series of advertising meetings when people were planning their 2019 budgets with companies saying to us, 'What's your event strategy? How can I get in front of your readers?' Because it's clear what

team about how we need to celebrate being a magazine, and not try to create something digital on paper. It's the product of a generation and a decade of people who have grown up on the small screen, and who don't know how to design for the great expanse that the printed page offers.

What does your readership want or expect from your print magazine?
They want us to think about occasion and their digital moment, whether that's a video, audio or text-based moment, and for us to consider when do they have time to read? Which are those moments? So we give people 10 main issues a year of *Monocle*, then three, soon to be four, special editions, which are all thematic. We do food, we have a travel edition, we have a forecast which is more of a sort of a geo-political look across the year, and we are launching a business title – so you've got this quarterly pace. We've been doing special-edition newspapers for two years, a newspaper a week during August and during the Christmas period, because I believe there are people who like to kick back with a good old newspaper that hopefully employs the values a magazine can offer.

I think readers are looking for us to reach them with formats, and challenge them with formats. I think that's the key thing: there should not be a time where print goes the other direction. There's no point in saying our business plan is to reduce the magazine's trim size and reduce the paper quality. That's a race to the bottom. Then you have the other direction, saying, 'We need to be delivering something superior. This is a physical product with a haptic nature, so how do we enhance that at every level?' That's why our big bet has been on audio: we have eight podcasts, now running 24 hours a day on M24, our radio station. We said, let's use digital, not necessarily in a way that demands consumption via a screen. The screen gets me to a series of menus, but then I'm hitting play and listening to debates, documentaries, and magazine programmes that feed into the core topics *Monocle* covers every month. That's using digital in an appropriate way so there's no cannibalization of our print offer. In fact, it allows us to really enhance the content.

Do you remain as much of a print-magazine consumer as you used to be?

I don't know if digital is eating that much of my time. Maybe I don't look at magazines as much as I used to over the past 25 years, because it's my business. Sometimes, you have to get yourself into a mindset to read; that's why the *New Yorker* is pleasurable – it doesn't change. I know I'm not going to learn anything new from the *New Yorker* from a business point of view, so it's a pleasure to read. Whereas, if I look at lots of other titles, it's like, 'Oh, they've changed the paper stock, that's for the good', and I'm just analyzing it and looking at it from an editorial and competitive point of view, and I'm looking at the advertisers from a business point of view. So looking at magazines just ends up being work as well.

Media technologies have shifted continually to transmit information, yet reading on paper has never become extinct. Why will print never die?

Important things still happen on paper. Paper has a ceremony no matter what has happened with the advent of digital signatures or transferring PDFs. There's still an occasion to document signing. Paper holds a role and value, that's very much embedded into our society.

'Print advertising is the best way to justify an investment as it's placed where the client wants.' David Martin, editor in chief, *ODDA*

Yes, a part of me feels that I have a responsibility to support the newsstand. I'm not a subscriber, I have to admit, even though I try to push people to subscribe to my own magazine. I only subscribe to the *Economist* and the *New Yorker* because they're weekly. I sometimes don't get round to the *Economist*, but I save the *New Yorker* because it doesn't matter when I read it. I love having it. You can dip into the *New Yorker* from six months ago. I'm always sampling, always looking at things. Do I have enough time in my day, though? That's when I go back to timing, being appropriate, and delivering products to our audience that allow them to have moments to dip in and out and sample our print magazine in windows that suit their lifestyles and metabolisms. I think it's important to do that, but I certainly feel guilty sometimes about this stack of magazines beside my sofa that I want to go through.

I don't get to a newspaper as much as I should, but I take the *New York Times* home, no matter where I am in the world, or the *FT*, and will try to get to it. Of course, inevitably too, there are moments where it ends up in the recycling. I don't have the magic wand, I can't sit here like a saint either as a consumer.

What can print do that digital cannot?

It can challenge. This is maybe a philosophical spin off, but paper has actually reminded us that we don't have to be in a world of one choice. Because there are a variety of channels and media platforms out there for us today means we don't have to go in just one direction. That's a challenge for our times, because I think with everything, it can feel as if there is only one answer today – but there's not.

Olivier Lalanne,
editor in chief, *Vogue Hommes*

Faced with the digital world constantly spitting out information, print's action – or rather, reaction – must be to take its time, and invent another temporality. Slow down the pace, reconnect by taking a step back, thinking, calmly analyzing, modulating the 'emotional whole', and moving the magazine closer to the book, the only object capable of creating genuine affection. This is its real added value when compared to digital information that's consumed as quickly as it's forgotten. For *Vogue Hommes*, a magazine with only two issues a year, this is even more true. The long term is part of the magazine's DNA. The challenge, on each issue's glossy pages, is to move away from information and interaction, the spaces where digital is all powerful, and focus instead on creativity in both form and content: narration, engagement, opinions, subjectivity, surprise, quality content, in-depth articles, expertise and rarity. The other challenge is to invent new physical formats that are both original and desirable, and which reinforce the spirit of collectability and the sense of a 'unique object'. This is also a way to offer advertisers prestigious and long-lasting showcases for their campaigns. Especially as studies show that consumers appreciate print over digital when it comes to what they buy. Radically opposing print and digital's different missions will eventually make them both indispensable *and* complementary – and create a 360° *Vogue Hommes* experience.

Anja Cronberg,
editor in chief, *Vestoj*

When I started *Vestoj* as a print publication a decade ago, it was out of sheer frustration. I thought fashion publishing was a sorry affair: too great a focus on high-production-value visuals, at the expense of thought-provoking and well-researched text. The clout of advertisers was causing my peers and colleagues to self-censor, and material from other creative disciplines – art, architecture, film, music – was used simply to validate fashion. It seemed to me that the fashion industry was suffering from a collective inferiority complex, as if we'd accepted that fashion was lodged at the bottom of the hierarchy of the arts.

I wanted another kind of fashion magazine: one without advertising, not focused on seasonal trends, and with experimental forms of fashion writing, from academic research to prose to criticism and oral history, and images making the reader question the conventions of the common fashion shoot. I had no business model beyond thrift, and not much thought of digital.

Ten years have passed, and in the intervening years, many publishers have had to make even more concessions to stay afloat. Some big titles have folded, some people have been laid off and editors and publishers are constantly reminded of the threat of new media. We're expected to justify why we even bother with print – this feature being no exception. At the same time, I don't need to remind anyone of the plethora of indie titles on the newsstand; if print is on its last gasp, it's slow in letting go.

Perhaps paper publishing still holds sway because so many of those in power in this industry grew up with it. Though it's changing the system, fashion has been slow to adapt to digital publishing. Social-media influencers are begrudgingly accepted, and not-so-secretly dismissed whenever possible. Digital broadcasting is democratic and far-reaching, and therefore vital in fashion, but the system's ensconced elitism means that good old-fashioned glossy magazines are still higher up in the (unofficial) pecking order.

Vestoj is run more like an artist's endeavour than a conventional business, and thrift is still my middle name. I publish one issue every year. I have no employees and no office space. The no-ad policy means never having to worry about falling rates or mounting pressure. There's no one I have to explain or justify *Vestoj*'s rising or falling readership or followers to, so I don't keep tabs. I'm free.

Along the way, I've met individuals and organizations who can see the benefits of encouraging critical thinking in fashion, and support has followed. *Vestoj* has become a useful educational tool, and today my work is buoyed by institutions such as London College of Fashion and the Jan van Eyck Academie.

Vestoj is thematic. Past issues have been about failure, time, magic, power, shame. As a publisher, creator and educator, the printed page allows me to guide the reader through the thought and creative process of my collaborators. As opposed to the meandering way in which so many of us engage with the Internet, on paper, I'm able to relay a whole story, through text flow, graphic design, and the juxtaposition of text and image. I'd like to think of every *Vestoj* published as a survey or an exposition. The research behind every journal is slow and laborious and that's OK.

In every issue of *Vestoj* since its inception I've published a 10-point manifesto that aims to crystallize the goals of the platform, and – on a bad day – remind me of why I'm doing this. There's one point in particular that I return to again and again. It's point six:

'Everything shall be questioned – nothing is holy. We must challenge the status quo. We must always ask why.'

'We're expected to justify why we even bother with print – this feature being no exception.' Anja Cronberg, editor in chief, *Vestoj*

Nacho Alegre,
founder, *Apartamento*

We started our magazine in a moment when digital media were just beginning to become relevant. We also come from an industry – design – that is less powerful than fashion, so our financial model has always been different to most other magazines.

Since we couldn't, and still can't, rely on advertising in the same way a fashion magazine would, we need to sell a really high percentage of the magazines we print. For that reason, owning part of the distribution chain and being close to our customers and subscribers is key. These are the areas where we are still working to improve. Our business model might be closer to a manufacturing company than to a magazine.

In regards to digital media versus print, you're going to have people talking to you who are infinitely more qualified than us. Of course, we think there is no way print can compete with digital in delivering news. Even digital media is becoming obsolete for news, people feeding directly from Twitter and social media. Feeding news through social media is again changing the business model for many digital newspapers.

Print over the past few years has remained the place for debate, opinion, but even these will be absorbed by digital media. There is no real need for print there.

The actual need for print is even smaller than what we see at the newsstands; many print magazines don't have any specific need to exist physically. The only reason they do is that no one has yet found a valid digital business model that works. Since we started 11 years ago, I've seen the industry get smaller, but no real alternative on the other side.

A couple years ago I stopped buying my favourite magazine, the *New Yorker*, and started reading it online. There is no point in it existing physically, unless the numbers wouldn't add up if it were just digital. There is a lot of print I would buy related to the magazine – a book of the best of the year that I could keep; a book of the cartoons, because it would be a nice object. And so on.

There are still things that print provides:

Archives: digital content is buried among all the new digital content, every day, forever. In 15 years' time, if you want to understand today's cultural world, you won't be able to surf the Internet as it looks today in March 2019. You will have to find it in a printed format and for brands, this aspect is undervalued.

Validation: opinion is also moving towards digital media, but print, as today, remains a qualified opinion.

Belonging: people establish a different kind of relationship to print than they do with digital. There is an element of belonging around a magazine. This is an area where most magazines should work harder. A magazine today is not a communication tool as much as it was. It has more to do with status, with a certain closeness to its audience.

Understanding this is key to understanding what you're selling. It's only my opinion, but looking at the number of advertising pages of some fashion biannual magazines, my intuition tells me I might be right.

In our particular case, we have never mixed advertisers in the editorial. We don't do news; we don't feature brands; we don't credit anything that appears in the magazine. The reason we did this was that, production wise, it simplified our model a lot when we started. Then we didn't change because we don't think we should. In fact, we think the rest of the industry will.

It's been more difficult for us to get advertising clients, but there is no possible way these advertisers can leverage the relationship to receive anything from us. Of course, we're a tiny magazine, and it's not a business model that facilitates growth. But we do think advertising in a magazine today is and has to be an expression of belonging. I think any media that plays the game of 'you give me this, I'll give you that' will be dead in the mid-term. It will lose its integrity and then its only value as qualified criteria. There are plenty of examples around us.

Some magazines are, issue after issue, giving in to their clients' pressure and I think they're accelerating the crisis. The business model of some fashion magazines is simply unsustainable. But again, the problem is not print, but rather that no one has found a clear digital business model for quality press.

Susannah Frankel,
editor in chief, *AnOther*

Without wishing to state the obvious, the point of print is that it lasts. Of course, things exist forever online and may be looked at again and again, but the way they exist is very different: it's a world of not-always-so-ordered chaos. And uncertainty. Websites vanish. Articles are re-edited. News is faked. But print has a longevity and, at best, a truth: it's physical. In your hands. As an editor, that may be intimidating, sometimes: you can't change it. You can't right a wrong. But that makes it a statement of confidence, of belief.

There is room for different voices. In an ideal world, they create a dialogue, converse with each other. I hope that *AnOther Magazine* is a beautiful book, a considered and celebratory edit of a particular moment in fashion and culture, an aggregate of many of the most inspiring image makers and writers in the world, an aggregate that won't be found elsewhere. It's another point of view – the thinking behind the name.

Because *AnOther* is biannual – we've now turned 18, making us among the first of English-language biannuals, I believe – it has a degree of permanence. It contextualizes and commits to a naturally ephemeral subject matter at a point in time. We feel that people still enjoy print both for its tactile qualities – we use different paper stocks for different sections, try to introduce innovative formats, disrupt the physicality of the read – and because it can be picked up, put down, gone back to time and time again. *AnOther* is quite dense. It takes time to look, to read, to digest and absorb the content. Isn't the space to do that the most precious thing of all?

Digital content is digested in a completely different manner. It's fast, short, bite-sized, by-and-large, and more and more so. *AnOther* Magazine is the polar opposite. Both editorially and commercially, it requires – and affords – the luxury of time.

Nick Vogelson,
editor in chief and creative director,
Document Journal

What purpose does print have in 2019, now that digital has become the norm?
In an age in which the Internet can simultaneously give marginalized voices a platform and disproportionately amplify those who just want to make noise, thoughtful creation and consumption of media has never been more essential.

We are acutely aware of digital media's pitfalls: the need to quickly label events, to create and sell stories through neatly packaged headlines. As the news cycle accelerates into oblivion, the pace of print allows us to slow down. We can nuance our views and weigh our concerns. We also bring this sensibility to our digital platforms as much as possible.

Why do people continue to buy print magazines?
Life is different on paper and, on paper, different lives begin to commune in ways they can't in the everyday world. The talent we are fortunate enough to collaborate with seems to be always in conversation and in line with one another, often inadvertently. Only when the magazine is bound and printed do you begin to see the ways in which the preoccupations of an artist portfolio might speak to a conversation or an article. Themes I never anticipated emerge.

These sort of serendipitous interactions make us even more curious. They help us see connections that would not have otherwise been communicated, even existed. That sort of inadvertent generation of commonality and growth is, for me, the magic of print.

Media technologies have shifted continually, yet reading on paper hasn't become extinct. Why will print never die?
When the world is in such uncertain times, there is something reassuring about the permanence of printed materials. Online articles or Twitter threads can be hard to find the next day. The world moves on. I think there's something grounding about being able to take a printed book or magazine off your shelf, reconsider it, and know it will be there next time you need it. Online, there is so much emphasis on the collective forms of thought, which can be a good thing sometimes, but print nurtures an individual curiosity that is indispensable. You can ask yourself a question, and see where it leads you.

Luis Venegas,
editor in chief, *CANDY*

What are the current challenges faced by your magazine?
I wish I had more time and more resources to make much more and faster. I have many projects and ideas for the new issues and also for new formats; I'm just trying to find the most effective way to develop them and make them a reality. But

'Websites vanish. News is faked. But print has a longevity and, at best, a truth: it's physical.' Susannah Frankel, editor in chief, *AnOther*

'The problem is not print, but rather that no one has found a digital business model for quality press.' Nacho Alegre, founder, *Apartamento*

that's how it's always been here since I started self-publishing more than 15 years ago.

What purpose does print have in 2019, now that digital has become the norm?
Any communicative media – digital or print – is always based on three main purposes: entertain, inspire, and inform. In the case of printed publications, it's key to focus mainly on being entertaining and above all, inspirational. That dreamy quality of the greatest printed magazines still can't be found in digital media (except for the pioneering Showstudio.com). I enjoy magazines with personality, those that are a true reflection of the teams behind them, voices I enjoy, respect and even admire. I don't see any digital platform offering that kind of engagement, yet.

Why do you think people continue to buy print magazines?
A magazine is an object to hold, to touch, it smells; it's a sensual experience, I'd even say magazines are sexy. That experience talks to the animal in us, while – for the moment – screens talk to our brains. Magazines are seductive objects, no matter how old you are; it just depends on how open you are to all forms of creativity.

Which print title feels relevant in today's predominantly digital landscape?
System, for sure! I also love *Fantastic Man* and *The Gentlewoman*, *Purple*, *Dust*, *032c*, *SSAW*, *A Magazine Curated By*, *Holiday*, *Buffalo Zine*, *Apartamento*, *Luncheon*, *Dazed*, *Print*, *Vogue Hommes*, *Assistant*, *Re-Edition*, *Replica* and *PIN–UP*. I've always loved *Arena Homme +* and enjoyed very much *The Leopard*'s first issue.

Since the invention of the printing press, media technologies have shifted continually, yet reading on paper hasn't become extinct. Why will print never die?
Paper remains. Sometimes I save links of articles I like online and checking those again a few months later they've disappeared. I wonder where all the digital content of today will be tomorrow. Printed magazines are a witness, a reflection of a time, and there's usually so much more effort and thought about what's going to be put on a page than on a website. I can always go back to my April 1965 issue of *Harper's Bazaar* and enjoy its pure greatness; it doesn't matter it was done more than 50 years ago and long before I was even born.

Marie-Pierre Lannelongue,
editor in chief, *M, le magazine du Monde*

For a print magazine today, the main challenge is to keep standards high. That might seem obvious, but it shouldn't be forgotten. For our readers, the traditional readers of *Le Monde* and the new readers who buy it for *M, le magazine*, the question of price and value for money are real issues. So the only question really worth asking is: are we making a magazine that we would like to read every week – and which we'd be happy to pay for – if we weren't part of the newspaper?

For a brand like *Le Monde*, which has been around for 75 years, and *M, le magazine*, which will soon be 8 years old, print remains essential. It's the origin of our brand, even as we switch to a successful 'freemium' model with several types of digital subscription. The number of digital subscribers increases each month. So much so that the global circulation of *Le Monde* is increasing even as the numbers for newsstand sales and print subscribers fall, as is happening across the market. (Even if for us, it's a little less than the market.) When you add up all its distribution channels and high circulation rate, *M, le magazine* can claim more than 900,000 readers a week.

For over a year at *Le Monde*, our organization and our energy have both been geared towards gathering more digital subscriptions. And the basis of this drive remains the same: produce high-quality content that has real added value to make readers want to subscribe and re-subscribe. At *Le Monde*, having quality print and paid-for digital content pays. Indeed, it's the only thing that works.

At *M, le magazine*, we have added an Instagram offer to our free and paying content on the main paper's website. It struck us that the magazine's visual approach and its lifestyle character would best be expressed on this platform. So, we launched @legoutdeM a few months ago with the goal of making this *M, le magazine*'s lifestyle brand. This account, which is different to the magazine's (@m_magazine), offers an exclusive production, photos and text, that we want to develop further. We think it's the new voice for *M, le magazine*, a new expression of its style.

Since the magazine's creation, advertisers have followed the print version because they're very sensitive to the fact we are not just fashion and not just news. What made it difficult to position ourselves in the beginning – neither one, nor the other – has become an advantage: we offer the best of both worlds. Image and texts of the same standard! And as we work with the best journalists in France, we're very proud to collaborate with some of the best photographers, too, such as Harley Weir, Zoë Ghertner, Karim Sadli, Colin Dodgson, Tyler Mitchell, Alasdair McLellan, Coco Capitán, as well as some of the most visionary stylists, like our fashion director, Suzanne Koller. That is obviously the power of print. Now we want to translate that standard into our digital expression on Instagram.

In terms of the relationship between print and online, I recently had a sort of epiphany when the head of press at a big fashion house explained that while there was nothing better than social media and the influencers to sell products, nothing compares to an article in a big magazine for the credibility of a house and its artistic director in particular. It's still print that creates a certain gravitas, that consecrates them. Which means that today, it's not about digital versus print, but rather digital *and* print. We need to keep offering a high-quality print offer to support efficient, creative and powerful digital media.

Maxine Leonard and Valerie Wickes,
founders, *Beauty Papers*

What can print do that digital cannot?
Come the revolution – fuel a fire and keep warm.

What are the current challenges that your print magazine is facing?
Everyone is chasing influencers, followers and engagement, which means many brands are trying to find new digital advertising formulas by ditching their old advertising print formulas and putting everything online. This is making it tough for a lot of print magazines and the creative sector as a whole. Budgets have moved online and if you don't have numbers and data then you are nowhere. The challenge goes way beyond our magazine.

We have never had traditional 'advertising' and take a more holistic view: a meaningful life is about more than numbers. Brands will always chase consumers, so *Beauty Papers*' challenge is to not chase the brands.

What purpose does print have in 2019, now that digital has become the norm?
To inspire.

How has the digital revolution forced you to reconsider your print magazine's financial model?
Beauty Papers has always tried to challenge traditional publishing business models and relationships, as it did not seem to be working for the magazine or the advertisers.

In what ways is your rapport with your advertising clients changing?
Rapport and trust is very important, but it must not be confused with blackmail and control.

Why do people continue to buy print magazines?
There is the collectable side to human nature; there is still status in print and having a pile of great magazines and books on your table. There are also times when just to sit and linger over a visual or written feast is something only a beautiful magazine or book can provide. I think this moment both makes and gives time – as the physical act of gazing or reading opens the imagination and feeds the soul.

What does your readership want or expect from your print magazine?
We want to create extraordinary, bold, beautiful imagery that shows the extraordinary minds and talents of the artists and designers in beauty, fashion and art, with words that are insightful and amusing. We hope our audience wants this, too.

Print is a moment of study and absorption, of revisiting and rethinking. I think digital can be some of that, but it's more on the surface, more transient. I don't think much of digital creatively; it's more a media for response or dialogue. I notice even news channels just respond; investigative journalism appears dead.

'One can hide digital readership, but magazines make you wear your heart on your coffee table.' Mark Guiducci, editor in chief, *GARAGE*

'Brands will always chase consumers, so *Beauty Papers*' challenge is not to chase the brands.' Maxine Leonard & Valerie Wickes, *Beauty Papers*

Are you personally as much of a print-magazine consumer as you might have been in previous years?
Valerie Wickes: Music was my way in, NME had to be bought religiously. As soon as I saw *i-D*, I bought it – it was just brilliant and it's still a great, great magazine. It spawned a lot more style publications – *The Face*, *Arena* – which I bought. As I worked more in fashion I bought *Marie Claire*, *Elle* and *Vogue*. I followed Fabien Baron's odyssey of magazine art direction and design around the *Vogue*s, American *Bazaar* and *Interview*, too. *Dutch* was great and I loved *BIG*, too. I bought a lot of magazines, but now it's far fewer, down to space, time and work.

Which print title feels like a relevant proposition within today's predominantly digital landscape?
I have bought *World of Interiors* since it began. It always inspires and thankfully does not change or have too many new ideas. It just continues to deliver the most amazing interiors that don't just follow trends or talk about kitchens. It has a fairly low digital profile, even though it is very suited to Instagram.

image or a body of text. It is a sensation that neither e-books nor online galleries are yet to truly replicate, and it is a crucial step in the way humans both present and digest information. Try telling an algorithm to stir intrigue or to juxtapose moments of 17th-century chiaroscuro with contemporary collage (or a recipe, perhaps). Put that in your search engine and smoke it.

The laying out of a printed document and the mechanical gesture of re-folding two pages to reveal the reverse of one sheet and its successor is a tool that by its very nature provokes infinite plays of duality. To cite André Breton quoting Comte de Lautréamont, such moments can be 'as beautiful as the chance encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on an operating table'; 150 years old and that pre-Surrealist mindfuck still stands.

That designer I mentioned was Kim Jones, the creative director of Dior menswear, and an avid collector of printed ephemera. Later, I would discover his love of magazines extends far beyond that of most designers, some only keen to see their creations validated with full-page 'credits'. Within his collection, rare gems like a mock-up of *Studio 54: The*

'Try telling an algorithm to juxtapose 17th-century chiaroscuro with contemporary collage.' Dan Thawley, editor, *A Magazine Curated By*

Since the invention of the printing press, media technologies have shifted continually, yet reading on paper hasn't become extinct. Why will print never die?
It will continue to evolve. It would be great if print becomes more ecologically viable, cleaner and more sustainable. It's an important industry that needs support and people will always want print for something. The physicality of print holds memories and I am hopeful that people will always want this in some form.

Dan Thawley,
editor in chief, *A Magazine Curated By*

Several years ago, a wise fashion designer complained to me about the Internet. We were discussing research, and how the problem with Googling an image reference was that 'you don't know what's on the next page'. And he was right. Despite the wealth of digitized information available at our fingertips at all hours of the day, nothing truly compares to the beauty and instinct of turning the printed page to discover the contrast, the challenge or the continuity of what succeeds an

Magazine (replete with sticky-taped editor's notes) sit beside Salvador Dalí's infamous 'Marilyn Monroe as Chairman Mao' cover of *Vogue Paris* (the 1971 Christmas issue, believe it or not). In my collection, a 1955 copy of *Paris Match* featuring Jean Cocteau resplendent in military regalia sits alongside copies of *Nest* and Rei Kawakubo's large-format *Six*. So until we, and readers everywhere, find such joy in browser bookmarks and PDFs, I'll consider this question answered.

Fran Burns and Christopher Simmonds,
founders, *Print*

What are the current challenges that your print magazine is facing?
The greatest challenge for any print magazine is relevancy in the market place. It's undeniable that reading habits have changed and even we, the most avid of magazine buyers, no longer devours every issue with the thirst we once did. The days of pining for the latest issue are long gone. The fact that most editorials can be viewed online before the magazine is even on the shelves further robs a publication of its 'must-buy'

element. Also, the number of places to buy the magazines is also rapidly declining; the newsagents that used to stock all the specialist publications, as well as the more mainstream ones, are now clinging on by their fingernails. Indeed, many newsagents seem to have abandoned the idea of selling magazines at all. If even purchasing a magazine requires a supersleuth ability to know where they are stocked, then what hope have they? Another huge challenge is actually producing the thing. Paper mills are closing, the cost of paper is rising, and the market for paper is dwindling, which will surely only exacerbate the problem. Therefore to make even the simplest format is more expensive now than when we started this project a few years back. But *Print* is just that, a celebration of all things print! By taking such a boutique approach, we both create and resolve our own problems.

What purpose does print have in 2019, now that digital has become the norm?
Print was created as a direct reaction to what had become the norm. Sure, we can all look at a picture on a phone, but when was the last time you were able to hang an epic Mert and Mar-

What does your readership want or expect from *Print*?
Something they can't get elsewhere. These days any publication can throw a few posters into the mix, but we always strive to offer something that you didn't really know you wanted or needed. I think the next issue will raise a few eyebrows in that respect – it's no less X-rated than the vagina calendar from issue three, but we will continue our mission to have as much of *Print* around the home as opposed to sitting on the bookshelf. Luckily we come sealed in a box!

Are you as much of a print-magazine consumer as before?
While our habits have declined somewhat, more telling is the buying habits of the people in the studio. None of them buy magazines, zero! The desire just isn't there! Sometimes we can't even give them away. It's really the greatest indicator of where things are going. Also, the structure of most magazines is the same. Front section filled with advertorials or 'news' bits to appease the less glamourous advertisers, followed by some articles featuring celebs that have had copy approval from PR reps in order to avoid any kind of fallout, but which results in word after word of tedium, followed by

'Our financial model strikes fear into the heart of our accountant.' Fran Burns & Christopher Simmonds, *Print*

cus flag on your wall, or do a jigsaw puzzle of a one-off Pierre et Giles image created especially for the magazine? Digesting images in varying types of printed matter is something that we will continue to explore. I think it was Jefferson Hack, but forgive me if I remember wrongly, who reminded me that a magazine is merely a vessel for its contents. That ideology is what spawned *Print* in some respects and the fact that it isn't simply an A4ish wad of paper glued down the spine.

In what ways has the digital revolution forced you to reconsider your print magazine's financial model?
Our financial model strikes fear into the heart of our accountant. If we sold it for what it costs to make then no one would buy it as it's astronomically expensive and, to date, we have only been lucky in securing one commercial partner to assist in covering our costs. Therefore we were inspired by Peter Saville and the Factory Records saga with 'Blue Monday', whereby it cost more to manufacture the 12" than it was sold for. Every record sold lost the label money. Luckily our magazine will never go on to be the biggest selling magazine ever (unlike 'Blue Monday' for 12"), but the ethos is there.

some fancy fashion imagery, *et voilà*. It's no wonder that people are turning their back on the establishment publications. My purchasing of magazines comes partly from love and partly (with some titles) from duty, but I entirely understand why there are problems.

Since the invention of the printing press, media technologies have shifted continually, yet reading on paper hasn't become extinct. Why will print never die?
There will always be a market for printed matter, so while it will never die, it's certainly not charging around full of the vigour of youth. The future is to embrace digital and offer a more unique package. There's no point reading a magazine for news now; the content needs to be something that can be cherished more and not so disposable.

Cecilia Dean,
founder, *Visionaire*

I am not sure I am the right person to ask about print. As founder of *Visionaire*, I have always seen it as our mission

to offer an experience beyond the traditional printed magazine, even back when we started in 1991 before digital existed. Actually, it is impossible to fully appreciate an issue of *Visionaire* online. Editions need to be touched, dealt with, sometimes we include smell, taste, textures. In a strange twist, *Visionaire* makes more sense now than it did almost 30 years ago. But with the advent of social media, instead of diving deeper into our limited-edition issues, we have expanded our idea of 'experience' into public arts activations by offering opportunities for people to generate their own content in real life.

I am astounded by how many print magazines there are, and there seem to be new ones popping up all the time. To be honest, I don't really understand it. Unless there is a reason for something to exist as an object to be kept, photos look better and text is easy to read on a lit screen. Why do we chop down trees and use toxic inks to create something disposable? Sorry, colourful printing on glossy paper does not make a keepsake.

I'll admit, personally, I still read printed books and I have the Sunday *New York Times* newspaper delivered to my doorstep, but I consider these nostalgic relics from a bygone era. Neither makes any sense, especially since, professionally, I stepped away from the traditional print-magazine world over five years ago.

As I face the future, my constant challenge is to convince advertisers to put their money into digital and into experiences. This is a time to be creative, to be inspiring, to collaborate with the arts; it is an opportunity for brands to make an impact on culture at large, on a global level, and to communicate thoughtfully with a huge young audience hungry for meaningful content.

Sophia Neophitou-Apostolou,
publisher and editor in chief, *10*, *10 men* and *10+*.

I really wanted to find a less predictable response to the question posed. Of course, there is always the emotional response to print, the value of it being more permanent and precious. I tried to find a more scientific reason to understand my emotional response and why we are so attached to printed matter. There is the physical experience of the paper, the smell and what it triggers in our brains, and how we retain information printed on a page much more than on a screen (which is scientific fact, I discovered).

My desire has always been to create a specific curated visual voice in *10* magazine. Almost like different genres of music dialoguing about fashion and art, giving us all our own specific point of view, but all singing from the same hymn sheet, part of the same clan.

There has been an enormous migration to digital media and as *10* magazine enters its 20th year, I have seen massive changes. I have totally embraced digital formats from the beginning, understanding that for me and my brand, they presented alternatives to engage my readers. We could offer movement in digital with films of our world creating an authenticity of experience and process that our readers respond to, a different kind of connectivity.

Scientific proof exists to substantiate the true value and longevity of print. A neuroscientific study by Bangor University showed that paper content activated the ventral striatum area of the brain more than digital media – and the ventral striatum is an indicator of desire and valuation. This means that physical material is more 'real' to the brain. It has a meaning, and a place, better connecting it to memory because it engages with its spatial memory networks. It involves more emotional processing, which is also important for memory, and it produces more brain responses connected with internal feelings, which, the research suggests, means greater 'internalization' of the content. So the science clearly shows that paper can be more impactful and memorable than digital.

This proof, this movement back to print has definitely impacted our world in a positive way. I have seen more brands coming back to specific print publications, as well as our own, and increasing their presence in display ads and partnered stories. There seems to have been a real growth in the print market and a real increase in display advertising. Brands really seem to have shifted back a lot more of their budgets to print. We have seen a growth that we could not have predicted in our own advertising environment. The market is increasingly buoyant for specific print, to the point where last November *10* magazine launched a new sister magazine called *10+*, a total antithesis to the immediacy of digital.

'I'm astounded by how many print magazines there are. To be honest, I don't really understand it.' Cecilia Dean, founder, *Visionaire*

A more luxurious poster box where each story is a poster instead of bound pages. It demands time to sit, unbox and experience each fold-out sheet. It demands the luxury of time and interaction, like listening to vinyl. It is housed in what appears to be a photographic print box and sells for £50. This new 'boxazine' takes the magazine to an even more interactive publishing level where there is an appetite for the more bespoke experience of content.

I really feel the print sector especially ours, biannuals and quarterlies, is growing and has definitely weathered the storm of digital. Long love print!

Joerg Koch,
editor in chief, *032c*

What are the current challenges that your print magazine is facing?
Some independent magazines, including us, are not really affected by the print crisis as much as the big mainstream titles as we have a more precise direction and readership. Our audience is growing. However, we are structurally affected by the decline of the print industry: distribution channels are shrinking accordingly, printer expertise is disappearing, and so on. Obviously we continue working with the best distributors, but this also means we have to build up our own channels of distribution. There are great synergies within our e-commerce platform, between our own fashion line and the print magazine. We ship out thousands of boxes a month, and that is a viable alternative distribution tool that we think has the potential to grow our audience, too.

What purpose does print have in 2019, now that digital has become the norm?
We are not dogmatic about the formats we use. Sometimes an idea feels most worthwhile as a T-shirt, sometimes it feels more urgent and appropriate for the website, and other times an idea simply needs to be featured in print. In this framework, print is one of several channels we use to communicate ideas. Sometimes it is the best format for this, other times it doesn't make sense. We take it easy.

How has the digital revolution forced you to reconsider the financial model of your print magazine?
I think *032c* has always been a response to the digital revolution. When I started *032c* in 2001, I was coming from a digital background in the late 1990s. The magazine was very focused on print, but it was essentially produced with a digital mindset. Every decision, especially the financial sustainability, was set out from a digital perspective.

Have you found your editorial tone or direction changing to suit the digital era?
Yes, the digital era forces you to think of every piece of content as capable of being self-contained. In print, you can create correspondences between the individual pieces within a magazine, sometimes hoping that 1 + 1 = 3. But we have become much more ruthless content-wise, to ensure that every piece can potentially be a hit online. This, of course, makes those correspondences within the magazine even stronger, and makes for digital content that can hold up in print, too, and we love playing with that reciprocity, bringing content conceived for web into the material publication instead of obeying the typical print-web hierarchies.

Why do you think people continue to buy print magazines?
Obviously, digital media is much more efficient and convenient when it comes to distributing information, but it cannot really offer a sense of identity. Everything is so atomized these days that people are looking for modes of identification, for points of connection. Strong magazines that aspire to offer that, by featuring ideas and speaking to and crystallizing a community, will experience a renaissance. The magazine has to perform for the hardcore reader and the casual browser and function as a source for identification. 'Coffee-table magazine' has always been used pejoratively, but it accurately describes the phenomenon. I am happy to see people putting *032c* on their desk, whether at home or at the office. People are also getting tired of their communication and media consumption being moderated – filtered and tracked by these big American platforms. No one is harvesting and reselling your data when you're looking through a print magazine, which gives the experience an authenticity, an ethics, an intimacy and an immediacy that are very different from the kind you get on a digital platform.

'No one is harvesting and reselling your data when you're looking through a print magazine.' Joerg Koch, editor in chief, *032c*

In what ways can print engage your advertisers that your digital channels cannot?
I am convinced that you cannot create a long-lasting brand with just digital advertisement. Electricity gone, brand gone. Print advertising for luxury brands is still unsurpassed. You create more attention, more focus, more context, and there's more potential in terms of the quality and feel of the physical materials. The ads just look so much better, and they communicate so much more directly with the reader.

Since the invention of the printing press, media technologies have shifted continually, yet reading on paper hasn't become extinct. Why will print never die?
It is still the best technology for reading, storing information, and making ideas look and feel fabulous.

Mark Guiducci,
editor in chief, *GARAGE*

I collect old magazines – *Vogue*, *Vanity Fair*, *Life*, *Spy*, *Acne Paper*, *Artforum*, *The Face* – and, long before I was its editor, *GARAGE*. I must be the *New York Times*' youngest living print subscriber. Obviously, I believe in the value of print, but I also recognize its irrelevance. By the time I open the morning paper, I've read everything I care about online, so I use it as a barometer of how important the *Times* editors thought the articles were. ('Above the fold? Impressive.') Print is absolutely not for news. It's neither reactive nor sharable, so is ontologically incapable of virality. It's hardly for reading. It defies contemporary art and fashion, which are predicated on telling us what is now and what is next, respectively. That print even still exists is honestly kind of punk.

And yet, everyone prefers print. Everyone. To shoot for it, to write for it, to appear in it. One need not buy a print publication to consume its contents – there's literally nothing in *GARAGE* that you can't read online – which means that purchasing a copy is an endorsement. It has to, as Marie Kondo says, spark joy. Print is also a matter of self-presentation, maybe even an extension of logomania. 'Am I a man of the *Times* or a *Wall Street Journal* reader?' (You already have my answer.) One can hide a digital readership, but magazines make you wear your heart on your coffee table.

Today, *GARAGE* is a digital platform with a biannual print publication. There is nobody at *GARAGE* who doesn't work across media in some way. Print training informs digital editing, and digital informs everything. But if *GARAGE* is a community – extending from paper to pixels to gatherings of people IRL – our print readers are our most loyal members. Print alone is not a business model, but the business model doesn't exist without it.

Ezra Petronio,
editor in chief, *Self Service*

What can print do that digital cannot? For starters, it will stay in your mind for longer than a second. In our screen age, we hyper-consume on a micro scale, continuously scrolling on our touchscreens engorging an unlimited amount of visual information.

Publishing today has not only become digital, it has also become mobile. Our reading habits and experiences have radically changed. We browse intuitively, sometimes with intention, quite often aimlessly. A constant flux of disposable novelty.

Print versus digital is in my opinion a non-debate. They are simply complementary. The digital offers a multilayered experience, rich, diverse and immersive. It is immediate and about the 'now'.

As a creative and fashion magazine, when your content is meant to celebrate fashion photography and the visual arts, the physical object gives the reader the luxury of scale, dimension and timelessness. It is in this regard that the printed page ultimately transcends the ephemerality and the aesthetic quality of the 1080px digital post.

Katie Grand,
editor in chief, *Love*

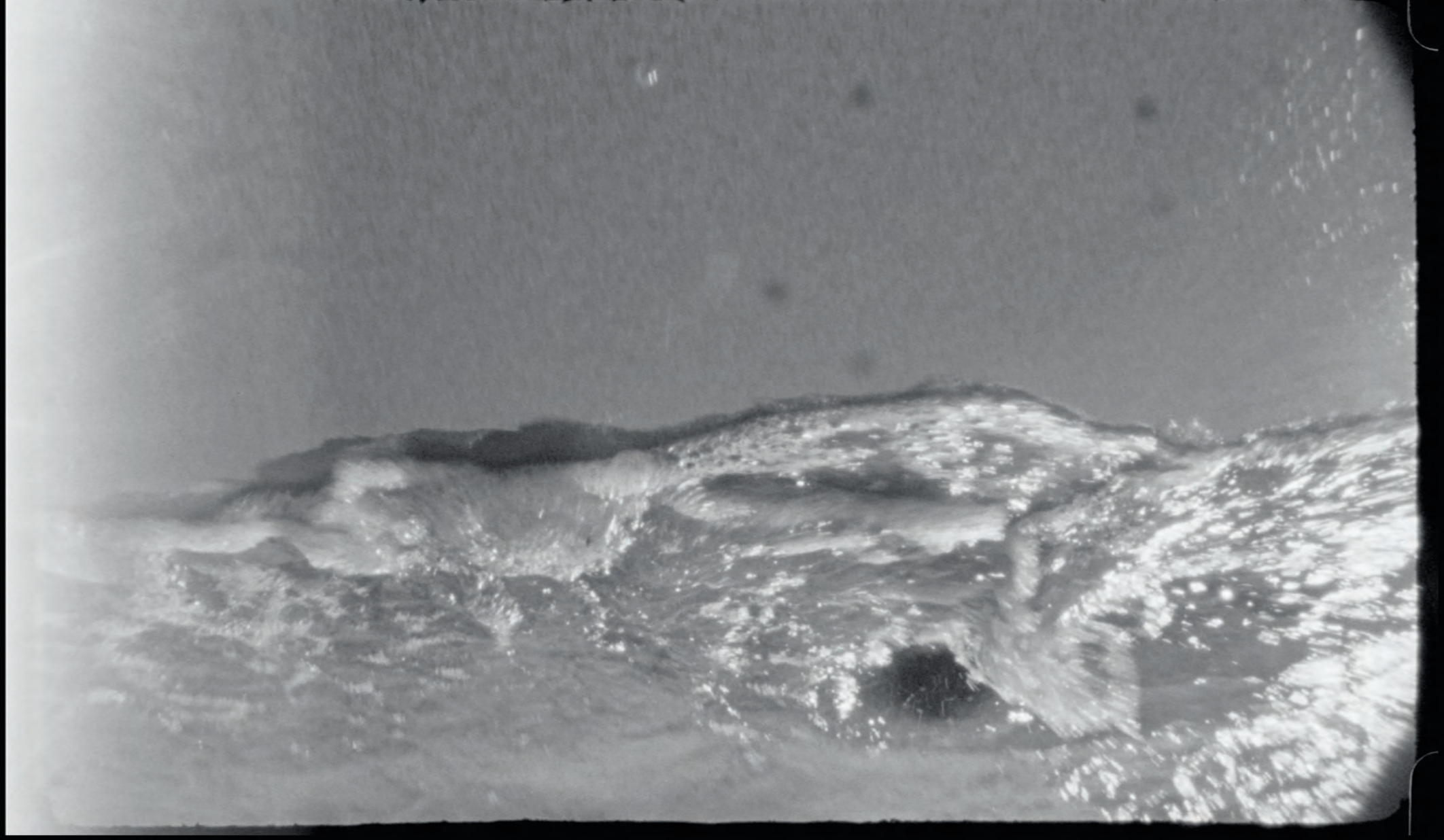
Nothing beats a well-designed and well-edited print magazine.

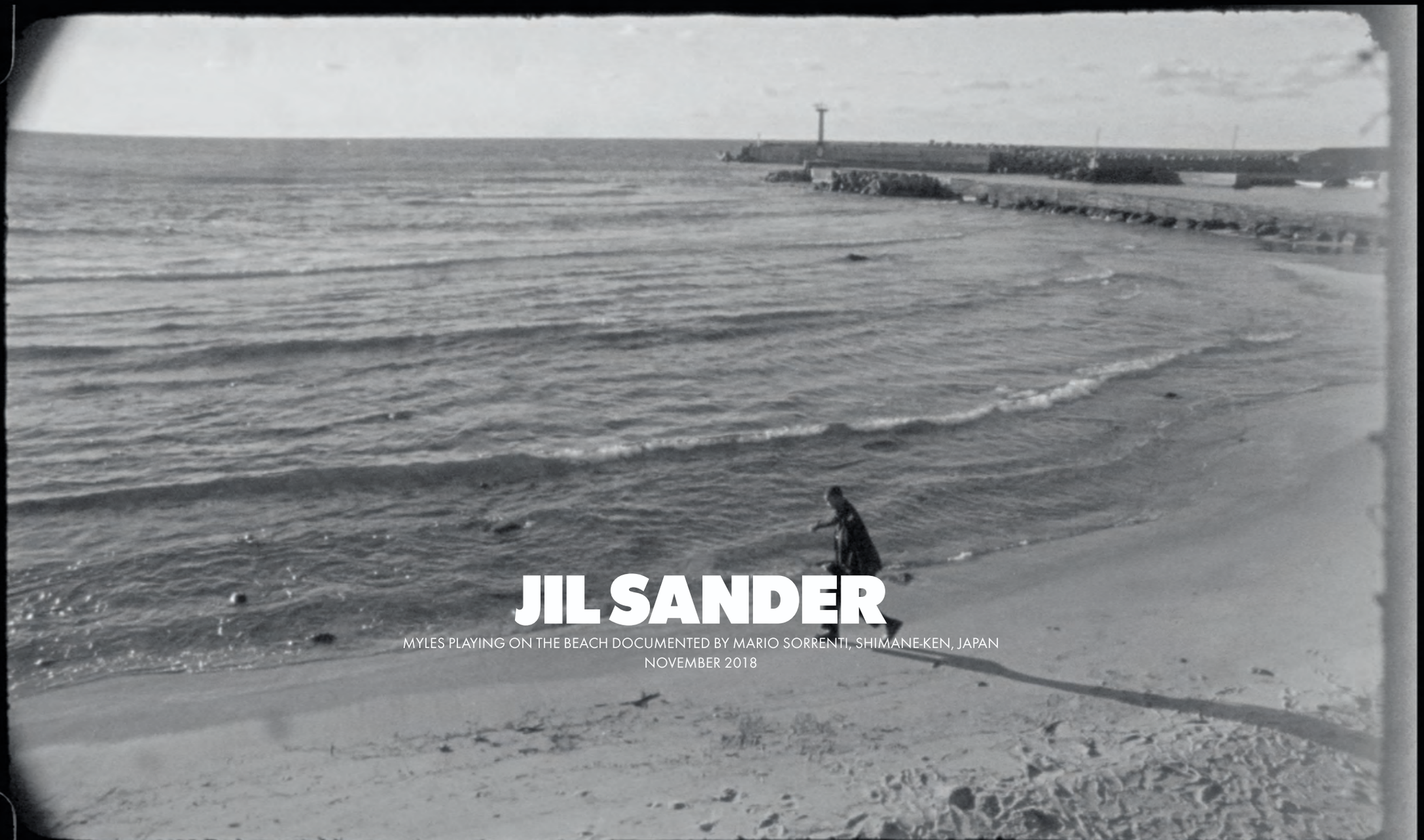
‘We just wanted to go off the map.’

Jil Sander’s seasonal campaign meant shooting a 16mm road trip across Japan.

Images by Mario Sorrenti
Text by Jorinde Croese

ANSLEY STANDING IN A BATHTUB DOCUMENTED BY MARIO SORRENTI AT TOUKOUEN RYOKAN, TOTTORI-KEN, JAPAN
OCTOBER 2018





MYLES PLAYING ON THE BEACH DOCUMENTED BY MARIO SORRENTI, SHIMANE-KEN, JAPAN
NOVEMBER 2018

After 11 collections at Jil Sander, Luke and Lucie Meier have settled in. Since presenting their first resort collection for the label in June 2017, the husband and wife's unique design symbiosis has helped update Sander's essence of cosmopolitan cool. Lucie previously worked at Louis Vuitton under Marc Jacobs, Balenciaga under Nicolas Ghesquière, and Dior under Raf Simons; Luke was the design director at Supreme for nearly a decade, after which he founded his own menswear line, OAMC. Together, they have brought grace and purity combined with a street-smart understanding of branding to Jil Sander, thanks to work that feels strikingly contemporary and relevant. The Meiers have publicly commented that several of their collections have been made in response to the gloomy world in which we live, and have featured clothes that offer comfort like luxury blankets (their Fall 2018 runway show even featured a model carrying pillows).

The intimacy found in their work – perhaps an inevitable side effect of the continual overlap between their business and private lives – naturally feeds into the campaigns they have created with photographer Mario Sorrenti. 'We got together and started working with him for our first season,' explains Lucie. 'We went to his house in Mallorca and did a project there, which was like a first show preview. It was such a pleasure to work with Mario, and a good feeling.' That project – for Spring/Summer 2018 – became the document of a carefree summer: snapshots of jumping off the rocks at sunset and delicate imprints of dried grass on knees. 'We just really liked the energy,' adds Lucie, 'the way Mario interacts with people and what comes through in the pictures.'

'Of course, shows and the collections are important,' Lucie says. 'We firmly believe in the tactile experience. You need to touch, to try on, to feel things, but images are how people can understand us first.' To capture the Spring/Summer 2019 Jil Sander campaign, the Meiers considered different media, before settling on photography and film. 'Mario has worked with film for quite a while, and he suggested working with the Bolex, a 16mm camera,' explains Lucie. 'It gives such a warm and intimate feeling, and real soul to the images.'

The decision of where to shoot was easy. For many years, the Meiers and Sorrenti had dreamed of doing a road trip across Japan, hoping to get lost in the landscapes and discover hidden places. With a small crew, they set out to spend four days touring the north-western coast of Japan's biggest island, Honshu, far from sightseeing spots of shrines and Mount Fuji. Travelling from a fishing town in Shimane Prefecture, to an *onsen* – bathhouse – in Tottori Prefecture, to the city of Matsue, they searched for the essence of Japan in the air, mist, smells and flavours of *ryokan* rooms, small local restaurants, and factory buildings. 'Japan just felt like a really logical place to go,' Luke says. 'It's also inviting because it's compact. If you do a road trip in Japan, there are lots of things to see as opposed to when you're on the road in western North America, where it can be five hours between towns. We just wanted to go off the map, out of the big cities. And it's always the small things that make a journey interesting. A lot of the imagery was actually shot in nondescript parts of towns, focusing on the colours of a back alley or the way a street looks.'

Japan has long been an important place for the Meiers, who have often travelled there for work, most often just in the big cities. 'The appreciation of beauty, both organized and precise, but also organic and imperfect is important,' Luke says, explaining how Jil Sander fits so neatly into a Japanese context. 'The balance and harmony of opposing ideas, forms and textures. It's about the search for the "ideal" in emotion and aesthetics, which is always fluid and evolving. What is fundamentally important is the approach to life and work – and this we can genuinely feel when we travel there. This approach is also seen in the fabrics and other materials that we source there. For us, Japan is a really important place.'

05-08.09.19 Brussels Gallery Weekend

SAVE THE DATE

Opening night
05.09.2019
5pm - 9pm

ALICE GALLERY, La Patinoire Royale - Galerie Valérie Bach, Ballon Rouge Collective, Baronian Xippas, Galerie de la Béraudière, Bernier/Eliades Gallery, didier Claes, CLEARING, Damien & The Love Guru, dépendance, Dvir Gallery, MLF | MARIE-LAURE FLEISCH, Galerie La Forest Divonne, Galerie Felix Frachon, Pierre Marie Giraud, Gladstone Gallery, Xavier Hufkens, Victor Hunt Designart Dealer, rodolphe janssen, LA MAISON DE RENDEZ-VOUS, Irène Laub Gallery, Harlan Levey Projects, MANIERA, MARUANI MERCIER, Galerie Greta Meert, Meessen De Clercq, Mendes Wood DM, Jan Mot, Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Office Baroque, QG GALLERY, Almine Rech, Sorry We're Closed, Spazio Nobile, Stems, TEMPLON, Vedovi Gallery, Waldburger Wouters.

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freetop art brussels MOBULL DS AUTOMOBILES

Photograph by PierGuido Grassano.

The Derek Blasberg Questionnaire

By Loïc Prigent

What was the best thing you learned from Karl Lagerfeld?
A sharp wit is the most stylish thing in the world.

What's your favourite app for communicating?
I love e-mail and despise talking on the phone.

How many hours did you spend yesterday on your phone?
A little under four.

How many e-mails did you receive yesterday?
I would try and add them up from my various e-mail accounts, but the sum would be too depressing to know.

Who is the last person you text before going to sleep?
Depends where I'm sleeping.

What makes a good fashion party?
Guest list, guest list, guest list.

Which is the best part of the Met Gala?
Leaving.

Which is the best airline in the world?
I love the Eurostar.

Which is the best hotel in the world?
Ritz Paris in the winter and Hotel Cipriani in Venice in the summer.

Which star still leaves you star-struck?
Barack Obama.

What is the first question you'd ask Martin Margiela?
I guess I'd ask, 'Are you Martin?'

What is the first question you'd ask Valentino?
Where'd you get your plates?

What's your tip for conducting a good interview with Anna Wintour?
Be on time, and on time is 15 minutes early.

Can you define the new spontaneity we see these days on YouTube?
When YouTube content is good, it has three As: aspiration, authenticity and advice.

Who are your five favourite fashion YouTubers?
Only five? Emma Chamberlain, Colin Furze, James Charles, Rickey Thompson, and Naomi Campbell.

What part of the New York attitude would you bring to the Parisians?
Service with a smile.

GIVENCHY

LOUIS VUITTON